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ABSTRACT

This theme issue of the serial "Educational Foundations" contains five articles devoted to the topic of "Studies in Empowerment." In "The Disempowering of Empowerment: Out of the Revolution and into the Classroom," Margaret D. LeCompte and Kathleen Bennett deMarrais focused on placing the term in proper historical context. Guy B. Senese "Away from Goodness: The Challenger Disaster and the Irony of a Nation at Risk" utilized the story of the U.S. Challenger shuttle accident to shed light on the character and ideals of U.S. public education. In "Rethinking the Concept of 'The Popular' in Critical and Poststructural Social and Educational Theory," Maureen Stout explored the concept of "the popular" and the relationship to the context of less developed countries and Latin America in particular. Daniel J. Walsh and others, in "The Two-Year Route to First Grade: Administrative Decisions and Children's Lives," examined a practice of requiring large numbers of students to take two years of schooling to get to first grade and found the practice ineffective in changing school failure. In the fifth study, "The Boys in the Band: Sexism and the Construction of Gender in Middle School Music Textbook Illustrations," Julia Eklund Koza analyzed middle school, music textbook illustrations of people engaged in music-related activities and found that textbook pictures presented few challenges to dominate discourse and underrepresented women musicians and conductors. (CK)

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Educational Foundations

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Contents

Introduction 3

The Disempowering of Empowerment: Out of the Revolution and into the Classroom 5
Margaret D. LeCompte and Kathleen Bennett deMarrais

Away from Goodness: The Challenger Disaster and the Irony of a Nation at Risk 33
Guy B. Senese

Rethinking the Concept of "The Popular" in Critical and Poststructural Social and Educational Theory 51
Maureen Stout

The Two-Year Route to First Grade: Administrative Decisions and Children's Lives 67
Daniel J. Walsh, Mary E. Smith, and Natalie L. Baturka

The Boys in the Band: Sexism and the Construction of Gender in Middle School Music Textbook Illustrations 85
Julia Eklund Koza

Editorial Overview

Educational Foundatons seeks to help fulfill the stated mission of the American Educational Studies Association to enhance scholarship in and among the educational foundations disciplines by providing a vehicle for publication of articles and essays which feature analysis of the foundations, of foundations methodology, of applications of such methodology to key issues of the day, and of significant research which evolves from and unifies the foundations disciplines, all focusing on the interdisciplinary nature of the educational foundations fields.

Educational Foundations seeks articles and essays in four primary areas:

1. Exposition on the nature of the educational foundations--essays exploring the foundations, highlighting definition, interrelationships, strengths, difficulties, and other aspects of the combined fields.

2. Application of the foundations disciplines to an issue of significance--collections of articles around a specified theme, bringing to bear the nature of the various foundations disciplines on such themes. Information concerning themes for future issues of the journal may be obtained from the co-editors.

3. Methodology--articles exploring methodological issues of the foundations fields, stressing similarities and differences among the disciplines.

4. Research--articles describing or reporting on new research in the foundations fields, with emphasis on interdisciplinary aspects of such research.

Contributions to ***Educational Foundations*** are solicited from members of the American Educational Studies Association as well as from all other scholars in the foundations of education and related fields of study. While the journal is open to submissions from all interested scholars, the standards for review and acceptance of articles and essays are stringent. Submissions should follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*, with a suggested length of 25-30 doubled-spaced pages, and be sent in triplicate to: James Pusch, Co-Editor, ***Educational Foundations***, Foundations of Education Office, Fedor Hall, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, Ohio 44555. When an article is accepted, authors are asked to submit the final version as an ascii textfile on computer disk.

Introduction

This issue of ***Educational Foundations*** publicly marks the beginning of the transition of the journal to new editors and editorial offices. As the new editors, we would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to Kathryn M. Borman and Patricia O'Reilly, the previous editors at the University of Cincinnati, and to Felecia M. Briscoe, the editorial assistant at Cincinnati, for their years of service to the journal. Their mark on the journal remains, both literally and figuratively. This editorial team directed ***Educational Foundations*** through a crucial phase of its existence, and the manuscripts in this issue (as well as those that will appear in the fall 1992 issue) were ushered through the review process by Felecia, Kathy, and Patricia.

We are looking forward to moving ***Educational Foundations*** through its next phase of growth. We have adopted the theme of "Equity" for our first year of work with the journal and actively solicit manuscripts that explore themes of equity from historical, sociological, political, anthropological, economic, and philosophical perspectives. The deadline for submission for our first "Equity" issue (Winter 1993) is October 1, 1992. We are also planning a new look for the winter issue, the first issue that will fully represent the work of the new editors.

Manuscripts submitted for review to ***Educational Foundations*** should be sent to the following:

Bonnie Auletta, Managing Editor
Educational Foundations
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Fedor Hall
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410 Wick Avenue
Youngstown, OH 44555

We request that four copies of the manuscript (two blind) be sent and that referencing be according to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Finally, we would like to extend our thanks to the Youngstown Foundation and its president, C. Reid Schmutz, for their generous commitment to support the journal financially for the next three years. Their enthusiasm for this endeavor is matched only by our own.

--***Co-Editors***:
Jane Van Galen
James Pusch
William T. Pink
Robert Lowe

The Disempowering of Empowerment: Out of the Revolution and into the Classroom

By Margaret D. LeCompte and Kathleen Bennett deMarrais

Margaret D. LeCompte is a professor with the School of Education, University of Colorado at Boulder; Kathleen Bennett deMarrais is a professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, University of Tennessee, Knoxville. *This article is a revision of a paper presented at the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association, Phoenix, Arizona, November 17, 1988. The authors gratefully acknowledge the helpful comments of Donna Deyhle and William Tierney.*

The National Council of Teachers of English uses the following slogan on the front of their marketing mailings: "**Empower**[1] Your Students...and Yourself."

A headline from the *Knoxville Journal* (September 14, 1991) states: "Christian Group wants to **Empower**[1] Poor." The article says, "Today's workshop, '**Empowering**[1] the Poor Through the Church and Christian Ministry,' will focus on showing people how to help the poor help themselves."

General Perry Smith, U.S. Air Force (retired), states on CNN's *Larry King Live* program (February 25, 1991): "He [Norman Schwartz-

> kopf] ran this war [against Iraq]. That's the way it ought to be done. It's **empowerment**.[1] It was great on the part of people like Dick Cheney [Secretary of Defense] and the President and Colin Powell [Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff] to not grab the power, but to **empower**[1] Norman Schwartzkopf. It's leadership lesson number one."

In the past few years, the word "empowerment" has become the new darling of a broad range of people in leadership positions, from school administrators and educational theorists to high ranking officials in politics and the military--even the President of the United States. The term has valence for curriculum developers who try to create or enhance it, to community workers who feel the impact of its absence, and to the Establishment, whomever they might be, who fear its implications. It has both psychological connotations, in that it refers to feelings of individual self-worth and efficacy, and socio-political dimensions, in that it refers to the capacity to exercise power. To some, it has become a slogan; to others, it is a social-psychological process. Empowerment generally appears to be a term used by beneficent people **on behalf of** others; it is considered a good thing to give to others, or to try to help others obtain or achieve.

In this article, we present the term "empowerment" in what we believe to be its proper historical context. Our purposes are three-fold. First, we wish to "unpack" the term by reviewing its disciplinary and theoretical sources. Second, we establish a framework for the illustrative empirical studies in this issue--articles which discuss empowerment in the context of programs for Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, and women. Finally, we want to caution against loose and uncritical use of the term in social action and pedagogy. We are not arguing against the term either as a concept or as it is implemented by and for subordinated peoples. We do, however, believe that if uncritically embraced, empowering practices can lead to the very abuses they seek to redress--the further disempowerment of the oppressed. Empowering people requires more than simply giving oppression a name, confronting it, or even entering into helping and educative (Gitlin, Seigel and Boru, 1989) relationships with the oppressed. It is not even sufficient, as Fine and her colleagues (1988) have found, to facilitate the naming, confronting, and transforming of oppression by the oppressed themselves. Further, as Ellsworth (1989), Deyhle (1992) and Reyes and Halcon (1988) document, establishing what appear to be mechanisms for empowerment often raise initial hopes, only to dash them when it becomes clear that the mechanisms are at best, tokenism and at worst, a co-optation which justifies the **status** quo. Finally, as Rose (1988) and Fine (1988) note, resistance to empowerment--**not** doing what empowerers want one to do--actually may seem to be a far more viable and realistic response by oppressed people to their existential condition than principled critique or activism.

Some Initial Background

The origins of the term empowerment can be found in Enlightenment concepts of individualism, liberty, equality, and, most particularly, human rationality (Popkewitz, 1989). Its emphasis on self awareness, systematic analysis, and individualism makes it a distinctly western cultural concept. Its origins amidst studies of the oppressed begin with its application to independence movements of colonized peoples. Its meaning was essentially political, and emphasized traditions of democratic government and civic culture borrowed from and propagated by British, American, and French colonizers--whose rule was neither egalitarian nor democratic, but which established some of the initial architecture for representative, if not democratic or egalitarian, government. It was inculcated and reinforced by attendance in western style educational institutions widely established throughout colonized areas.

Analyses of empowerment usually address problems of people who are thought to be oppressed. However, it should be stated from the outset that this article is written by and from the viewpoint of white, dominant culture individuals. We are interested in clarifying the impact which dominant groups have had upon the concept of empowerment, whether they be Western Europeans, Anglo-Americans, Brahmins, Tutsis, or Mandarins. We provide an historical and theoretical look from the "top down," rather than from the perspective of subordinate groups who have experienced political, social, religious, psychological, or linguistic oppression. We also limit our discussion, for the most part, to events of the last 60 or 70 years. Our description of events always can be criticized as "elitist"; it is, however, a description without which the contemporary discourse on empowerment is incomplete.

The concepts which constitute the antecedents of empowerment derive from a western European or Anglo penchant to create names for the things they worry about. The penchant for worrying derives from the discrepancy between Enlightenment ideals and the realities of geopolitics and imperialism; how, for example, could one advocate liberty while enslaving others? When Western intellectuals named these discrepancies, they made real for scholars the conditions of social, psychological, political, and economic asymmetry which the actions of dominant groups, over time, brought into existence. Scholars then created a language or discourse to describe these asymmetries, which they found in Western-imposed patterns of colonial rule and mercantile economics which dominated most non-European populations in the world (Foucault, 1972, 1980; Said, 1978).

The process of giving names to these social and economic relationships was informed by a number of disciplines. While the language now used is suffused with the terminology of contemporary literary critics, postructuralists, discourse analysts, feminists, and phenomenologists, its origins can be found in writings as disparate as psychoanalysis, Marxism, and critical theory. As oppressed peoples

became familiar with the language of oppression and domination, subordination and superordination, they became able to argue back from their own perspectives in a language mutually intelligible to western intellectuals. This created the possibility of dialogues across class, race, culture, gender, and status; it also facilitated seizure of power by subordinate groups.

In our discussion, we will draw distinctions between earlier uses of empowerment as a means to confront political and structural asymmetries and subsequent efforts which emphasize the individual psyche and interpersonal relations. Further, we will indicate that while the colonial situation and analysis of its impact may have spawned the terminology which we now apply to such social relations, this same language now applies to asymmetries of domination and subordination not generated by imperialism or national expansionism. We seek to make it clear that the concept of empowerment becomes problematic when it takes seriously the issue of who has the power to define which individuals or groups are legitimately disempowered. It becomes threatening when indigenous people contradict the definitions imposed on them by elites, when these definitions diverge from western conceptualizations, or when they dis-empower others, including those who rule (Burtonwood, 1986). Finally, we shall suggest that the very act of participating in the empowerment of others may, in fact, lead to replication of new forms of subordination and control, ones which are hidden in an ideology of liberation and consciousness raising (see, for example, Deyhle [1992], Ellsworth [1989], Fine [1988, 1991], and Reyes and Halcon [1988]). In all of our discussion, we will emphasize the role of education and educators. We begin with an historical analysis of how three social science perspectives inform the concept of empowerment: political science, social-structural analysis, and psychology.

The Historical Origins of Empowerment

Conceptions of empowerment--or human liberation--exist at many levels. At the macro level they have concerned structural correlates of inequality and the role which dominant groups play in creating them. These originate in political perspectives deriving from struggles of colonized people for national independence, and from sociological and economic perspectives relating inequalities of class, race, and access to wealth to their role in perpetuating relations of domination and subordination. We begin our discussion with macro-level political and social-structural analysis.

The Political Dimension of Empowerment: Movements of National Liberation

Empowerment first was associated with movements for national independence. Throughout history, subject peoples have tried to control their destiny by

controlling their own real estate. This has meant establishing exclusionary rules dictating who may reside within a given geographic area and concomitantly developing the ability to enforce such rules through legal, military, or other means. The concept of the nation-state, developed in the 18th and 19th centuries, facilitated such efforts. This hyphenated term refers to the **nation**, or a group of people who share a common ethnicity, language, religion, and culture, living within a **state**, or a geographically identifiable political unit. Power is key to the existence of nation-states, since they must be able to enforce their recognition by other nation-states and to preserve the integrity of their boundaries. The establishment of educational systems was deemed critical to the formation and survival of nation-states, because civic education in the schools helped to construct and reinforce national identity. Allegiance to a nation, rather than to a family, clan, or community, was to be inculcated (Almond and Verba, 1965; Anyon, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 1970; Durkheim, 1961). The whole concept of modernity was, in fact, associated with attenuation of community ties and allegiance to more impersonal, abstract concepts of citizenship.

The development of coherent modern nation-states has been complicated in non-western nations by the existence of European colonial domination. The 20th century drive for independence of colonialized peoples has actually been a drive not only to wrest control from the colonizers, but to establish nation-states. What was sought was not only self-governance, but the same dignity and recognition as that held by European states. As Mannoni (1964) put it: "There is a sociological law which admits of no exception that all peoples, even the most ignorant and backward, are capable of governing and administering themselves, provided of course, that they are left to choose their own methods" (*op.cit.*, p. 174). Colonized peoples were not, however, left to their own devices. At least in the initial stages of independence, they sought to institute governments which were modelled after those of their overlords. This was made difficult in instances where colonies were actively prevented from developing stable or representative governments.[2]

With the defection of India in 1948, colonial empires established over the past 250 years of European exploration, expansion, and exploitation began to crumble. The era of overt European colonialism ended more or less in 1990 with the celebration of Namibia's independence. But achievement of nationhood was not accomplished without a price. In the interests of the larger goal of self-determination, quite diverse groups within a country often had been able temporarily to squelch their differences. Once independence had been achieved, however, coalitions began to unravel. In almost every case, new political boundaries cut across the territory of "nations," making the establishment of clearly distinct nation-states almost impossible. Within each new political unit were many culturally or ethnically identifiable groups, many of which felt they were still being subjugated by those who assumed power at independence. These groups now embarked upon a struggle for recognition and shared power.

Thus, the same dynamics of asymmetry which existed in the colonial situation vis-a-vis nations and national populations now began to be identified and acted upon at the level of groups within given societies. They were defined not only in terms of differences in language, race, and ethnicity, but also on the basis of distinctions like age, dialect, class, political or philosophical orientation, and occupational status. These groups sought at least some form of representation or self-government, and often viewed newly formed liberation governments as oppressors from which to liberate themselves.

This problem of fragmentation or "Balkanization" is not limited to the Third and Fourth Worlds; one finds active communal and separatist movements in Canada, Eastern Europe, and Soviet Central Asia. It can include groups as unusual as the Afrikaans-speaking "Basters" of Namibia, descendants of Black and White couples who, because of their color, were exiled from South Africa to Namibia. They now find themselves a conservative group within a nation more colored than they, and now are demanding their own autonomy from the new Ovambo-dominated government. At this point, the viability of multicultural societies seems fragile indeed. The modern world thus is faced with a dilemma: how much to divide the pie, and who shall do the dividing?

Social and Economic Dimensions of Empowerment: Class and Economic Struggle

Social scientists make a clear distinction between *coup d'etat* and revolution. The term *coup d'etat* simply refers to a transfer of political power at the top from one group to another which re-institutes the same attitudes and oppressive practices of its successors. A revolution, by contrast, results not only in a change in the individuals who govern, but in the relative distribution of social status and access to economic resources. A revolution literally turns the society upside-down; it removes an entire stratum from the top and deranges traditional relationships between wealth, status, and power. Old forms of "cultural capital" and the "habitus" of privileged classes (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) lose their power to dominant and new forms of hegemony, said to be based upon different standards, take their place.

Early movements of national liberation did, in fact, result in substantial power going to indigenous peoples, because the people at the top, those who governed and who controlled the major industries, were removed as legislatures were created and filled with indigenous elected officials and industries controlled by foreigners were nationalized. However, once initial power shifts occurred, actual shifts in relations of power did not always accompany changes in the political map. In other words, not only did movements of liberation often lead to indigenous *coups d'etat*, rather than social revolutions, but education often played a key role in subverting real transformation. For example, the British hoped to preserve existing status

hierarchies in West Africa by exporting to the colonies schools modelled on the elite "great public schools" of England. They assumed that the northern Muslim aristocracy would send their children to these schools, just as English aristocracy at home did. However, traditional chiefs boycotted the schools, having no need to seek status outside the existing system. Those who did send their children to western schools came from disenfranchised and lower classes who saw in Christianity and western education a way to escape from immutable disadvantage in the traditional caste system. When independence came, these native-born, substantially westernized individuals, not traditional elites, assumed the privileges and perquisites of power of the departing colonial administrators and they either eliminated traditional elite groups or relegated them to largely ceremonial roles. Political and economic power remained concentrated in the hands of a few, and little subsequent trickle-down of power and influence to the grass roots occurred.

Similar events took place in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe and Asia, where a "new class" of peasant and working class revolutionaries (Djilas, 1957; Hinton, 1966) acquired enhanced status to the extent that they formerly **lacked** traditional privileged forms of cultural capital. However, while a shift of power did occur, the new ruling classes quickly began to emulate the old. The new leaders moved to institutionalize their privilege and attempted to transfer it to their children by reserving for them schooling opportunities linked to desirable job opportunities (see Clignet and Foster, 1966; Foster, 1965). These events have led to the realization that redistribution of political power without redistribution of social and economic power is not enough. True independence, whether at the individual or national level, is linked to and generated by power in the social and economic realm. Further, it is meaningless if its acquisition does not result in a more democratic and stable re-distribution.

The Colonization of the Self:

From National to Personal Forms of Liberation

At the same time that political activism generated movements of national liberation, scholars and literary figure began to explore relationships between subordinate and dominant groups from both psychological or psychoanalytic and interpretive and interactionist points of view. Thus, focus shifted from macro level political and social-structural issues in nations to a micro level or psychological concern with individual self-concept and feelings of efficacy of subordinated persons. The psychological perspective often combined insights from anthropology, following the lead of culture-and-personality theorists like Ruth Benedict (1934, 1946). It also spawned studies of "national character," which, like culture-and-personality studies, attributed to whole groups of people personality characteristics more commonly associated with individuals.

Psychological Dimensions: Overcoming Identification With the Oppressor

Psychologists, psychoanalysts, and novelists initially explored the psychology of colonialization (see, for example, Mannoni, 1956; Fanon, 1963, 1967), or the psychological impact of unequal social relationships upon both colonized and colonizer. They applied essentially psychoanalytic concepts once reserved for analysis of the behavior and beliefs of individuals to the behavior and beliefs of groups of people, employing Freudian concepts such as the Id, Ego, and Superego to subordinated groups. They also were concerned with development of individualism and enhancement of self-esteem, and self-awareness.

These terms and concepts have, however, a strong cultural bias. They derive from clinical work by and with western Europeans; they reflect western cultural biases, and they celebrate what to Europeans and Americans constitutes a healthy, well-functioning individual. To that end, they focus upon fulfilling the potential of individuals, rather than upon the welfare of collective groups. They posit that, just as individuals must possess a certain degree of self-awareness, self-esteem, efficacy, and confidence in order to maintain mental health and to function independently within human society, so also must groups of individuals--including entire cultures and nation-states--exhibit the same characteristics in order to create and maintain stable and adequately functioning political government.

Arguing from a psychoanalytic perspective, the French psychologist Mannoni (1964) describes the interaction between political and psychological dimensions of movements of national liberation succinctly: "The Malagasies do not want national government in order to ensure their independence; they want sufficient independence to be able to have a national government" (1964, p. 134). To the psychologist, then, achieving independence means taking power, but in order to take power of any sort, people first must feel **entitled** to possess it. This requires acquiring sufficient self-confidence--feelings of efficacy and personal self-esteem--to act independently. The psychological dimension to early examinations of empowerment used an implicit analogy to the family, positing the same kinds of dynamics between colonizers and colonized as exist between parents and children. Empowerment, then, had to do with identifying sources of oppression (or neurosis), rejecting identity with the oppressor (or parent figure) (Fanon, 1963, 1967), and throwing off dependence, especially upon a colonial power (or family). It was operationalized in a search for respect and equal treatment, as well as refusal by oppressed individuals to accept derogation of their indigenous history and the often pejorative labels which colonizers applied to them.

Psychologically informed research emphasized the rage, bad feelings, and impotence of the oppressed, as well as the prejudice, ill-will, and hatred of the oppressor, rather than the social-structural and class constraints which led to the conditions of oppression in the first place. The emphasis remained upon describing

reactions to the existence of conditions of subordination and domination, rather than examining in detail how they might be created and overcome (see, for example, Grier and Cobbs, 1968). Because it displaced responsibility for change from external structural conditions to the individual psyche of oppressed people, this approach encouraged victims to blame themselves rather than their environment for their subjugation.

Interpretive or Interactionist Dimensions: Constructing Identity

The focus on individuals has been reinforced by analysis of language and interaction. The study of nuances of language, movement, and patterns of interaction has shed further light upon asymmetrical social relationships, illuminating not just **how** subordinated people feel (including the neuroses and pathologies which subordination produces) but the interpersonal and interactional processes by which these feelings and statuses are created. We have defined these as micro-level concerns because they are accessed by means of clinical studies of individuals and intensive studies of dyadic verbal and non-verbal inter-personal interaction. To the extent that they restrict their concern to what individuals do in immediate and rather limited contexts, and do not link their findings to macro-level, social-structural, and political origins, these studies also tend to encourage a focus on individual, or victim, rather than system or structural blame.

The conceptual and theoretical frames of anthropology, symbolic interactionism, and phenomenology, as well as the data collection and analytic techniques of socio-linguistics, have facilitated this work. They have provided a better understanding of how the relationship between behavior and belief works to create mutual definitions of self and context. The focus in this research is "situated learning," or the construction of meaning in context and its implications for internalization of behavior and belief patterns. It explores the **social construction of identity and reality**, whose components include the characteristics--ascribed and achieved--which actors bring to the setting--e.g., schools and classrooms--the contextual factors they encounter in the setting, and how their individual expectations are met or denied. This research posits no objectively defined *a priori* reality, but rather, that reality is a consequence of relational conditions, defined by the perceptions of those participating in it (Berger and Luckman, 1967; Blau, 1967; Blumer, 1969; Garfinkel, 1967; Schutz, 1962) In this context, individual identity is not a given, but is formed in a crucible of human interaction and belief. It is not always formed in the best interest of individuals, no matter how self-aware or well-intended they might be. For example, George Orwell's (1936) story, "Shooting an Elephant," brilliantly portrays how context can trap people into acting against the best interests of everyone, even while being acutely aware of the forces which constrain them. The story, which is set in colonial Southeast Asia, depicts the British administrator of a small town. An ordinarily

gentle elephant is tortured by a handler and runs amok, killing his torturer. Bureaucratic fiat dictates that elephants who kill humans should be destroyed. However, everyone knows that the dead man, not the elephant, was at fault. If the animal is destroyed, the livelihood of its owner, a friend of the administrator, will be eliminated. Nevertheless, the crowd of villagers clamors for the white man to enforce the rules, as have all white men before him, notwithstanding that the outcome would violate the general good of the village, impoverish the owner of the so-called rogue elephant, and contradict the relatively enlightened ideals and intentions of the administrator. Transformed into a heavy-handed bureaucrat by the expectations of the crowd, the administrator reluctantly orders the elephant killed, fulfilling his historical destiny by assuming a socially constructed identity and reinforcing the colonial stereotype.

Thus, stereotypes encourage labeling, and labeling establishes expectations and constrains behavior, both on the part of the labeller and the labelled. Educational researchers have made good use of this form of analysis to show how teacher perceptions lead to categorizing and labeling of students, which in turn are integrated into the student's own definition of self. The classic study, "Pygmalion in the Classroom" (Rosenthal and Jacobsen, 1968), first called attention to how powerfully labels affect the grades teachers assign to children. Since that time, a substantial body of research has documented how students and teachers construct both negative identities and attitudes toward school (Erickson, 1987; Herr and Anderson, 1991; McDermott, 1987; McLaren, 1986; McLeod, 1987; Page, 1989). Recognition of the interactional and constructed nature of identity formation has led to attempts, especially by educators, to develop positive, instead of negative, attitudes in children and oppressed people. These efforts link research whose unit of analysis is the individual to attempts to manipulate the process of identity formation in order to create "positive," or "empowered," identities for oppressed people (Giroux, 1983; 1989; Gitlin and Smyth, 1989; McLaren, 1989). The principal vehicle for this change involves the acquisition of complex, school-related cognitive skills, particularly reading and writing, and using them in the process of critical thinking (defined as the capacity to identify sources of oppression and inequity) to build self-awareness and self-esteem.

Beyond Individual Identity: Defining and Constructing Oppression

A major weakness in the focus on individuals is the extent to which contextual factors--and especially asymmetries of power--constraining individual agency are ignored. Educational reforms are particularly vulnerable to this charge; compensatory education programs, which recognized the inequity of equal treatment, are an unusual example of programs which did take into account the cultural and political context of school failure.

The analysis by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) of **cultural reproduction** was

among the first to explore linkages between the micro and macro, showing how effects observed at the micro-level were associated with factors in larger social, cultural, and political spheres. They first pointed out that the differentiation in society was not just a consequence of class--or one's relationship to the economic structure--but rather involved issues of culture--or the habits, beliefs, tastes, and way of life which their class status leads individuals to assume. Bourdieu referred to this constellation as "habitus," asserting that it constituted a form of **cultural** capital, which was no less important than other forms of capital in its capacity to generate social structural differentiation. The concept of cultural capital spotlighted the importance of knowledge as a form of capital, in that acquiring cultural capital involved nothing more than acquisition of knowledge and information, preferably that which other people did not possess. Since social class differentiation was tantamount to differential access to knowledge, then access to knowledge determined the class structure. The question remained: how does knowledge held at the level of class become internalized at the level of individuals? To answer this question, critical theorists and interpretive researchers have begun to examine how knowledge is created and distributed. We next summarize briefly the work of theorists who have contributed to this issue.

Feminists, critical theorists, and interpretive researchers believe that what constitutes knowledge also constitutes what is deemed true in society in any given era. Therefore, the ability to control the production and distribution of knowledge becomes one of the most important sources of power in society. Those who control production of knowledge also control the definition of truth, and, in turn, the definition of reality. This--the ability to define reality--constitutes the fundamental source of power within a structure of domination. It creates legitimacy for forms of social institutions, aesthetic styles, and types of domination. It thus is the means by which value is assigned to varying aspects of culture, designating some cultural practices as "high," and therefore to be emulated, and others as "low," or uncouth, vulgar, and undesirable. In addition, as Foucault (1972; 1980) has pointed out, over time power actually creates truth, or makes truth possible in specific historical, material, and spatial contexts. Thus, because schools, mass media, and other agencies of socialization control the production and dissemination of knowledge, they also disseminate current "truth" and, as such, are crucial agencies in the perpetuation of existing patterns of hegemony. They exalt heroes, castigate villains, and establish standards for valuing. They legitimate, for example, the perceived relationship between producing correct answers in school and intelligence, and between success (or failure) in school and occupational attainment.

Determining just how historical patterns of differentiation and asymmetry come to be taken for granted, reinforced, and internalized among a population remained to postmodernists, deconstructionists (Derrida, summarized in Cherryholmes, 1988), and semioticists (Eco, 1979) to explore. Their purpose has been to confront the discourse of power, whether in speech, written texts,

performance, or patterns of everyday behavior to uncover meanings which have been hidden by the overlayering of hegemonic definitions and common practice. Giroux and Simon (1989), for example, point out how, in their disavowal of body imagery, the sensual, and flamboyance, conventional aesthetics, or standards for appropriate behavior and "good taste," serve to devalue and render vulgar the aesthetics and cultural practices of the working class.

Finally, writers like Habermas (1983) and Gramsci (1971) ask how, in the face of almost overwhelming domination, do people exercise agency? Where is the struggle for individual human dignity and collective emancipation located? These writers establish that the struggle for identity and meaning can be found in the rituals, practices, and content of popular culture. In "counter-cultural" beliefs, aesthetics, and entertainment, scholars find evidence of counter-hegemonic activity--ways in which individuals find wiggle room--or establish patterns of resistance within prevailing systems of domination (Deyhle, 1986; Giroux and Simon, 1989; Grossberg, 1989; Roman, 1988; Skorapa, 1989; Smith, 1988).

The Applied Dimension: Saving Souls or Fomenting Revolution

Empowerment becomes activism in the hands of applied or critical social scientists who enter the field not as researchers, but as change agents with an agenda. Although they use the language and concepts of social scientists, they are concerned with elimination, not analysis and description, of the causes and consequences of oppression. They attempt--to borrow a variety of slogans from the past--to mobilize subordinated people to acquire independence, get out the vote, bring power to the people, throw off feelings of inferiority, conquer the Establishment, and become empowered. Their activism is predicated upon the realization that change needs a catalyst; it almost never "trickles up." Most frequently, catalysts for change have been outsiders, not members of subordinate groups. They choose to identify with the oppressed for various idealistic and humanitarian reasons. Even those actually born of oppressed families are marginal to their origins; their sense of perspective comes from having acquired, usually through education, the customs, patterns of thinking, and aspirations of the dominant class. Because they are somewhat assimilated, they constitute an "other" to the people they study or work among--even their own families. This creates a whole range of dilemmas involving ethical relationships, the use of power, and disclosure of information.

For purposes of clarity, we distinguish between two kinds of change agents or social activists: those who emphasize individual agency and those who advocate change in the structure of power. The former emphasize what could be called saving souls; their approach is both spiritual and psychological and posits the need for manipulating social relations at the micro-level--in classrooms, clinical settings, and small groups. It includes more inward, culturally oriented, and

values-focused work like that of Cummins (1975) and Barnhart (1982) in education, as well as movements such as religious fundamentalism and New Age forms of self-discovery and meditation. Because this group is most influential in public education, we will discuss their work in more detail later in this article.

The latter group of activists is composed of those who seek social revolution. They emphasize the macro or structural level and advocate class and political struggle. They are concerned with individuals and their own self-awareness not as the critical unit of analysis, but only with individuals insofar as they are members of a **class** or social category. They include the class-conscious and politically-informed activism of people like Martin Luther King, Saul Alinsky (1972), Paolo Freire (1970, 1973), Ivan Illich (1970), and Miles Horton (1980).

Some change agents have attempted to create a synthesis between individual empowerment and social revolution. They argue that macro level structural changes can be initiated at the micro level, by grass-roots empowerment movements stimulated by critical pedagogy. Advocates assert that pedagogy--especially the teaching of critical reading, writing, and inquiry skills--can bring about individual self-awareness--or empowerment--and that empowered individuals can then in turn confront oppressive social structures as catalysts for wider change (Apple, 1982; Ellsworth, 1990; Freire, 1970; 1973; Giroux, 1983; 1989; Gitlin and Smyth, 1989; Lewis, 1990; McLaren, 1989). Unfortunately, recent research on some of the most widely used approaches to critical literacy indicates that they utilize models of pedagogy most effective for middle class children. Phonics programs confuse language minority students. Some widely touted programs, which use writing to improve reading, emphasize the importance of having teachers serve as reading role models, and require children to engage in the production of interactive journals with their teachers, often are ineffective and confusing for both disadvantaged and language minority children. Furthermore, the proliferation of special programs--and complicated fragmented scheduling to accommodate them--reduces the actual amount of instruction at-risk children receive, splinters a child's attention span, and reduces intimacy levels with teachers. All of these work to further disadvantage such children (Bennett, 1986; Cummins and Miramontes, 1989; Delpit, 1988; Reyes, 1990; Richardson, *et.al.*, 1989).

Education and Empowerment

The Educational Connection: Empowerment for Class Versus Self Consciousness

Analysis of movements of liberation and their consequences for empowerment are naturally connected to education. Activists have used education to raise the consciousness of oppressed groups: whether at the micro level via development

of culturally appropriate curricula (Barnhart, 1982), development of socially critical thinking (Giroux, 1983a, 1989; McLaren, 1989), hiring staff who, since they belong to the same status group as the oppressed, can serve as role models; or at the macro level by integrating literacy campaigns into programs for development of personal awareness and analysis of patterns of class and economic domination via literacy campaigns and community development (Laubach, 1960; Freire, 1970; 1973), studies and analysis of community resource bases and to whose advantage they operate (Adams, with Miles Horton, 1975), liberation theology and the establishment of "base communities" from which to spread ideas of reform and change (Cleary, 1986; Lernoux, 1982), or outright organized agitation (Alinsky, 1971).

There are two groups of educational activists. The first operates in non-formal educational settings (see LaBelle, 1986) where teaching and learning take place outside of formal educational bureaucracies and teachers often are lay people or non-professionals. Education, or pedagogy, is an adjunct to the primary goal: community mobilization, organization, and reform or revolution. Non-formal education in this sense has been most common in revolutionary societies.

A more conservative, reformist approach focuses on micro-level educational processes and participants within formal, usually public, school settings, where education or pedagogy is the primary objective, and social mobilization is a secondary objective, if present at all. It is this second sphere which is of most interest to this discussion. The reformist approach to the concept of empowerment, or self-determination, has been used in two ways. The first has to do with ethnic and cultural studies; the second addresses ways that grass roots ferment in education is advocated to bring about social and political change in the larger society. We address these issues chronologically; educators first addressed empowerment in terms of ethnicity and culture; only recently did they begin to confront political and social disempowerment directly.

Attempts to Empower the Culturally Different: Cultural Studies

Approaches to empowerment of the culturally different are closely related to the dynamics of movements of national liberation described earlier. They emphasize re-building of self-esteem, power, and independence through teaching about and re-capturing the unique and valued heritage or ethnic identity of the given group. In this way, they attempt to develop or re-capture a respectable and legitimate cultural or ethnic identity for oppressed groups. For example, during the 1950s and 1960s, the liberation of African nations stimulated recapture by American Blacks of their own origins in an independent Africa, one with tangible and recent ties to Liberia and other African nations. In fact, disaffected American Blacks had expatriated to Africa in search of an escape from bigotry and oppression. Transplanted to America, these concerns transformed the study of race

relations from analyses of anti-Semitism to Black Studies. Throughout the 1960s, ethnic studies meant Black Studies; cultural awareness was an awareness of and a response to ethnic--specifically black--rage. In quick succession, however, the field broadened to include studies of other ethnic and cultural groups and of women, the handicapped, and homosexuals.

In its initial stages, cultural studies emphasized consciousness raising--building ethnic pride through filling in the blanks of history left because the historical record had been created by dominant culture males whose image it reflected. The historical literature was bolstered by many "survival stories"--personal accounts by minority individuals who described their experiences searching for identity and trying to survive in a society ostensibly egalitarian, but actually racist and oppressive. The purpose of both was to explode the myths of freedom and democracy in America (see, for example, Maxine Hong Kingston's *Woman Warrior*; *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*; Vine Deloria's *Custer Died for Your Sins*; and Cesar Chavez's *Sal si Puedes*.)

Hegemony Fights Back: The Co-Optation of Empowerment

Consciousness-raising and cultural awareness stimulated attempts by dominant cultural groups to co-opt movements of self-determination. The demise of colonialism generated among the more developed countries of the world a decidedly conservative, global backlash among dominant groups to reduce, co-opt, or eliminate movements of liberation, whether by individuals or nations. In part this was generated by fear that the process of ethnic schismogenesis would accelerate, even in developed nations; but it was clear that struggles for liberation and empowerment constituted a powerful threat to existing power structures. As a consequence, educational programs and curricula which once advocated independence, revolution, and class struggle now began to stress how individuals should struggle either to adapt to existing conditions or to build individual self-esteem from within. Especially in education, the oppressed have been encouraged to focus less on external correlates of oppression and more upon their own deficits and their role in creating the conditions which oppress them. Such blaming-the-victim also has siphoned off much socially conscious activity of dominant culture activists into "good works," social work activities which serve to bandage the worst wounds of oppressive systems without changing their structure or purposes (LeCompte and Dworkin, 1988).

Multi-Cultural Studies

Multi-cultural studies were introduced as an antidote to cultural divisiveness. The goal of multi-cultural studies ostensibly was to promote recognition and

celebration of the ethnic pluralism of America and to defuse linguistic and cultural nationalism. Multi-cultural studies brought courses in ethnic awareness into the mainstream. They were made requirements for university graduation and teacher certification, and integrated into the curricula of public schools. However, multi-cultural studies often degenerated into tokenism; multi-cultural faculty slots became the only ones filled by minorities. Multi-cultural courses became courses taught only by minority faculty, who, because they were seen to be serving their own interests, were not taken seriously (see Halcon and Reyes, 1988; Ortiz, 1981). As an antidote, attempts were made to diffuse multi-cultural course content, once isolated within individual courses, throughout the curriculum. The consequence, however, was not a broad infusion of liberal thinking and tolerance, but dilution of the content to meaninglessness. Their impact was weakened by having their efforts reduced to presentation of festivals and famous faces, knowledge of slang and a few "does and don'ts" to facilitate more superficial forms of social interaction. A hallmark of multi-cultural studies was the failure to include study of the dominant culture, except as the cause of oppression (see Burtonwood, 1986); cultural studies was the study of "them," not "us."

Most important of all, teaching of this content was not often done well, and seldom was enforced. Even where multi-cultural content was mandated by state and federal law, the most cynical evasion of regulations for teaching multi-cultural materials and providing multi-cultural experiences frequently became the norm. It became clear that the dominant culture controlled cultural studies and retained the power to define the terms by which oppressed groups could define themselves. Where members of oppressed groups did define themselves, they were seen as dangerous troublemakers--such as Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, Cesar Chavez, Russell Means, Vine Deloria, Angela Davis, and Reyes Tijerina.

Culturally Appropriate Curricula

With the best of intentions, educators have recognized that there is, indeed, a cultural gap between minority children and the school which substantially impedes the ability of such children to achieve. The solution has been to build "culturally appropriate" curricula which deliver dominant cultural content in ways which are ethnically appropriate or culturally congruent with the native learning styles of the children.

Problems with this approach include the fact that the studies of culture upon which these curricula are based have been done primarily by members of the dominant culture, often innocently enough because few native researchers were available. The materials used often have been old ethnographies which portray the cultures as they once were, in a static, romanticized past, rather than reflecting a more accurate picture of their dynamics, change, and adaptation. Native people then are defined not by themselves, but by members of the very cultures which have

oppressed them. They thus can only be "authentically native" insofar as they act in accordance with the stereotypes held by whites. When these culturally appropriate curricula are enshrined in coursework whose completion is a requirement for graduation and certification, they constitute a new set of obstacles to legitimacy for minorities. They lead not to empowerment, but to another form of oppression.

Developers of cultural studies programs also often confuse culture with ethnicity, transforming such courses into studies of ethnic minorities, rather than studies of all cultures, including the dominant ones. They then are defined as appropriate primarily for the minority students who become their only clients. In these cases, cultural studies simply becomes labelling in new clothes. They also facilitate a form of tracking. Insofar as their cultural studies requirements take time away from mainstream academic studies, minority students frequently are taught less than, or with different materials from, dominant culture students. These practices de-skill and re-segregate the oppressed. Finally, as we shall discuss in detail later, culturally appropriate programs can become traps, to the extent that the dominant culture individuals who run them fail to relinquish power to their supposedly empowered native counterparts.

Subversion Within the Ranks: Empowerment of Teachers and Students

Discouragement over the repeated failures of school reform to facilitate educational success among minorities has led to a renewed focus on the micro-level--on teachers and students--in an almost quixotic hope that if only they were empowered, if only they were given sufficient strength, teachers might succeed in altering the hegemony of powerful educational and bureaucratic institutions. The emphasis on human agency in this argument has real appeal in societies with an ideology supportive of democracy and individual effort; it retains just enough truth to make it powerfully seductive. Marxist and neo-Marxist critics of education have used sociological and political analyses to focus on asymmetries produced not so much by ethnicity and psychological dependence, but by the social relations of production. They view teachers and students as labor and school boards and administrators as management or representatives of the existing patterns of hegemony, and stress the empowerment of individual underlings as a means of transforming bureaucratic institutions (Apple, 1982; 1986; Giroux, 1983a, 1983b, 1989). They call for creating democratic forms of schooling, initiated and presided over by empowered and empowering teachers who act as "transformative intellectuals."

When we first began the research for this paper, we had thought that the rhetoric of empowerment was only dimly being heard by the rank-and-file of public school teachers. Now, however, we realize that it has become a widely heard part of educational jargon. Cummins (1986) gave the term considerable currency

in his research on language minority children; he targeted teachers, not students, and referred to empowerment as "personal redefinitions of the way classroom teachers interact with the children and the communities they serve" (p. 18). Cummins' formulation attempts a synthesis between the macro, or political and structural, and the micro, or psychological and personal, dimensions. The psychological and personal dimension requires that teachers redefine their roles within the classroom, community, and broader society to empower rather than disable students. The political dimension requires that teachers "must attempt to persuade colleagues and decisionmakers...of the importance of redefining institutional goals so that the schools transform society by empowering minority students rather than reflect society by disabling them." In effect, Cummins makes a call for "studying up" to the power structure (Roman, 1990) as well as "studying down" (Harding, 1987) to the perspective of oppressed groups (such as students and teachers) and classroom practice.

Cummins' call for action has, however, been honored more in theory than in practice. This is why we believe that the concept of empowerment has come to be regarded by many teachers as yet another cynical and reformist panacea to problems of contemporary education. As one rural mathematics teacher of our acquaintance said, "Everybody is getting empowered...Teachers, dropouts...It's the solution to everything! In fact, if I hear one more word about empowerment, I'm going to pound the speaker right back into the ground where he came from!" (Boyden, 1989). The frustration comes from the knowledge among teachers and students that no amount of critical analysis or personal empowerment will, by itself, change the existing set of rules and structures. There still is no clearly defined link between the empowerment of individuals and changes in the larger institutional and society context, and no sense that collective action by teachers is either possible or potent. To our knowledge, few, if any, educational theorists have addressed how such mechanisms might be established and made workable for grassroots individuals in educational systems.

Empowerment and School Failure

There are three explanations for the enthusiasm with which educational reformers have appropriated the term, if not the concept, of empowerment. One is their disillusionment with the limited impact on educational outcomes of all previous forms of school reform. Despite decades of trying, the performance of children from minority and caste-like backgrounds still lags far behind that of dominant culture children. Teachers still are perceived by the general public and many policy-makers and educational researchers to be semi-competent, dissatisfied with their jobs, and burned out. Students still find that schooling lacks interest and drop out, often in droves. We believe that one explanation for their relative lack of impact on the outcomes of schooling is that reform efforts have largely been

reformist and ameliorative. They have concentrated upon teacher training, parent involvement, and different forms of delivering instruction, rather than the content of lessons, the social organization of schools, and their articulation with patterns of opportunity in the larger society outside school. Most of these efforts are only rather weakly associated with direct improvements in scholastic and occupational achievement, and they have little or no effect upon other expected outcomes of schooling, such as elimination of poverty (LeCompte and Dworkin, 1988; 1991).

A second reason for the enthusiasm which empowerment-as-school-reform generates is the hope among social meliorists that education can be used to avoid the implementation of more revolutionary modes of social change, ones which would be too dangerous to the **status quo**. Wittingly or not, educational reforms have worked through systems of formal education to co-opt radical change and reinforce existing patterns of hegemony. In practice, policy makers have advocated setting up programs to teach people **not** to do something, rather than take more radical positive action to eliminate the causes of social problems. This explains attempts to "educate away" teenaged pregnancy and drug abuse, poverty, poor nutrition and health care, and slovenly work habits in the labor force, rather than establishing programs to re-distribute income, improve national systems of health care and preventive medicine, regulate the food industry, reduce underemployment and unemployment, and pay serious attention to problems of child abuse and neglect (Lecompte and Dworkin, 1991).

The third reason for enthusiasm is that many educators argue sincerely that teachers constitute a vanguard for change in society, and that their critical and persuasive talents can transform society. In their sentiments and hopes, they hark back to the philosophy and pedagogy of John Dewey (Berlak, 1990; Cummins, 1975; Giroux, 1989; Lewis, 1990; McLaren, 1989), who saw in the well-run classroom both a laboratory and an incubator for democratic citizenship. While these sentiments are salutary, they still fail to establish a clear linkage between what individual teachers can do with students and demonstrable change in political economy or bureaucratic structures.

As sociologists, we feel that a position advocating empowerment-as-school-reform is a bit naive. It deflects attention away from structural and political issues, the real sources of the problem, right back onto the victims. It ignores the tenacity with which dominant groups hold to their privileged positions and can become another way to shift responsibility for social change downward, onto the shoulders of those least able to bring it about. Frustration grows, as teachers are left feeling as if they are praying to and acting in accordance with the dictates of a god that failed. Lacking a strategy for collective action, however, teaching students to be critical analysts of their own condition may not only be sound pedagogy, but also be the only day-to-day position which individual radical educators can take in the face of massive bureaucratic resistance to change.

Empowerment/Entrapment

In the previous pages, we have discussed what we believe to be some institutional and political pitfalls associated with the use by educators of the concept of empowerment. In this final section, we address an additional and more general concern: that policies whose aim is empowerment can actually result in further oppression. Our discussion is intended to further a critical dialogue; our hope is that in being aware of pitfalls and traps, educators might more fully realize changes in educational structures and practice.

The Language Trap

Since, as we have indicated, the concept of empowerment has come from many and quite varied disciplinary, historical, and philosophical antecedents, one problem in its application has its origins in the power of correct language use. Simply put, the power to define whether or not a given group actually is acting appropriately, once empowered--or empowering--comes to substitute for empowerment itself. Arguments over what empowerment really is, who is oppressed, and who might truly be the "vanguard of the revolution" or savior of the oppressed, defuse a focus on the social relations of oppression which produce the need for empowerment. A preoccupation with language also can lead to the production of alternative phraseologies even more opaque than those they seek to expose; it can lead to a superficial preoccupation with minutiae and the "correct" use of speech forms which distance activism from both the sources and victims of oppression. Since no one but the initiate can understand the message, the committed preach only to the choir and have little energy left for actions on behalf of their clients.

Insofar as empowerment research is dominated by research techniques drawn from linguistics, and focuses upon the elicitation of symbolic and interactional data from small groups and dyads, it also can lose sight of constraints on behavior and belief located externally in the larger political economy. In the process, it may create new forms of elite domination. The dilemma becomes, how do you go beyond mere awareness of oppression? Once the language of oppression has been deconstructed and the myths and ideologies hiding oppressive patterns have been exposed, what do you do with the knowledge? To paraphrase the famous labor organizer, Joe Hill, when does one cease mourning and begin to organize?

The Power Trap

Another issue has to do more with the actual exercise than the definition of empowerment. Since those in power can define who actually is oppressed, they also define what their problems are, how they will be studied, and what solutions will be offered. They also can define themselves as oppressed, or not-oppressive. This can lead to dangerous absurdities, such as groups which advocate "white

rights" against the alleged abuses of affirmative action programs for minorities. Their use of the language of empowerment and equity to further oppression accelerates the bowdlerization of the term (Fine, 1991). It promotes practices which give the appearance but not the reality of power. In schools today, the emphasis on empowerment for teachers and minority students facilitates "forms of power" which are appealing to those who are oppressed as well as acceptable to the empower-ers. These forms of power include instituting types of restructuring--decentralized and democratized local governance--to replace more traditional, externally imposed forms of hierarchical control. While we welcome the fact that minorities thus do gain representation in certain levels of decision-making, we feel that they do so only within boundaries established by and acceptable to the dominant culture. Since power over bottom line issues like budgets, hiring and firing, and what is to be taught (as opposed to **how** it is to be taught) rarely are given to non-traditional groups, these forms often are surrogates which substitute for real power.

Minority individuals who "know how the system works" and who are acceptable to the dominant culture often are selected to represent their people on advisory councils, while real power is maintained by well-meaning mainstream decision-makers who think they are acting in the best interest of native people and feel that they know best how to empower them. The oppressors do not really bow out; they merely assume a more subtle presence, rewarding only those who conform to the current system.

Empowerment as it currently is defined may be a placebo, rather than an alternative to the current system. At worst, it can be a fraud--a substitute for a real personal and structural power which cannot be attained simply by feeling good. It also traps the change agent on the horns of a relativistic dilemma, where they are unable to define for the oppressed the conditions of their oppression without seeming to impose those definitions upon those they feel need liberating.

The Reformist Trap

A further problem is that agents of change can be seduced into reformist solutions where radical change is really needed. As we have pointed out, many of the reforms posed actually reinforce the status quo; some actually further disadvantage the disadvantaged. To the extent that this occurs, blame usually is placed upon those who failed to make use of the intervention to improve their status--the victims who once again are responsible for their own oppression--not the reform or the reformers.

Oppression by the Formerly Oppressed

A final danger, and one not noted often in the literature, is foreshadowed by the problems of Balkanization and communal warfare in emerging nations, noted

earlier. What happens when the oppressed oppress others? Burtonwood (1986) documents the dilemma posed for democratic societies by the specter of disempowerment by the formerly oppressed. In England, for example, Islamic fundamentalists have used the right to set up their own ethnically identifiable schools to establish curricula featuring a diluted, gender-stereotypic curricula for girls, effectively disempowering women.

Conclusion

As we have noted, the current movements for empowerment--whether political, psychological, or pedagogical--operate within a framework which maintains the efficaciousness of dominant culture hegemony, particularly when they attempt to stimulate change via formal educational institutions. Too often, they co-opt liberation movements, substituting new elites for old ones or permitting individuals to escape oppression only if they assimilate to the dominant culture. Too often, empowerment amounts to a top-down endeavor. While we believe that theorists, researchers, practitioners, and activists have gone far to identify the history, causes, and consequences of oppression and domination, we still are left with critical and unanswered questions.

What would real empowerment look like? Does it ever go beyond the mere escape of individuals from oppression to a real transfer of power from those who do have it to those who don't? Is empowerment meaningful in a culturally diverse society? Has empowerment really been co-opted by the dominant culture? or can differences be accepted as valid and can power be shared? Does giving power to the oppressed inevitably result in someone else's disenfranchisement?

In concluding this review, it is quite easy to close with a cynical view of empowerment. One could argue that since empowerment has become merely another hegemonic tool of the dominant culture, the best thing to do with the term would be to abandon it on the trash heap of failed educational innovations and fads. On a more optimistic note, we might use the concept of empowerment as a way to begin the change process--both individually and as a society. The term empowerment can serve as a cautionary signal to begin questioning and/or resisting those who would seek to disenfranchise us. It alerts us to ways to think about power and powerlessness, and challenges us to question who holds power in given contexts and why. It also provides a way to interrogate our own participation in the preservation of existing structures of domination.

The increasing number of calls for empowerment of oppressed groups, whether they be women, minority group members, the poor, handicapped individuals, students, teachers, administrators, or even army generals(!!), provide opportunities to question the structural constraints in our lives. The concept of empowerment embodies the notion of alternatives and possibilities. It necessitates that people become comfortable with conflict, disagreement, and change. Ellsworth

(1989) makes this point clear in the struggle of her and her students to open a classroom space for examining racism, classism, sexism, and ableism. They found that the process did not always "feel empowering." Contemplations--and the achievement--of empowerment must embrace this reality so that even when its participants are able to engage in a truly democratic debate, the practice never is wholly comfortable and energizing. Empowerment entails addressing pain, confusion, power imbalances, strong emotions, deep differences, and ambivalence. However, it may provide a way to open debate and move toward a world possessed of multiple voices and multiple possibilities for change.

In educational circles we talk much about empowerment, but little about the ways in which people become prepared to engage in this type of difficult work. For those of us who are teacher educators, the challenge is to explore ways teachers and preservice teachers learn. Our challenge is to move the domain of teaching and learning beyond its current private and personal safe haven into a more disquieting, but also more proper, social, political, and structural context.

Notes

1. Emphasis added.
2. The extent to which this is true is vividly exemplified in the cynicism of a recent statement by Barrie Wiggham, secretary for the civil service in Hong Kong. He defended the British failure to permit the growth of democratic institutions in Hong Kong on the grounds that since Hong Kong was to be handed over to the mainland Chinese, it would be counterproductive to develop democratic institutions that might only last a few years. Since the Chinese would dismantle the system anyway, the result would be a greater blow to Hong Kong's economic stability and confidence than permitting the residents of the colony any form of self-governance (Kristof, Nicholas D. [1990]. In Hong Kong, a deepening sense of despair and betrayal. *The New York Times*, April 12, 1990, p. A3).

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Away from Goodness: The Challenger Disaster and the Irony of a Nation at Risk

By Guy B. Senese

If the teacher in space doesn't come back to teach, something's wrong.[1]
—*Christa McAuliffe, Teacher*

I was asked, yes, at that point in time I was asked to quantify my concerns, and I said I couldn't. I couldn't quantify it. I had no data to quantify it, but I did say that it was away from goodness in the current data base.[2]
—*Roger Boisjoly, Engineer, Morton Thiokol*

Space is the place.[3]
—*Sun Ra, Musician*

Guy B. Senese is a faculty member with the Department of Leadership and Educational Policy Studies, College of Education, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb.

Introduction

No one who saw it will likely forget the Challenger

explosion of January 28, 1986. For educators, the event takes on special meaning since one of our own died as a result of that disastrous chain of events leading to the explosion that afternoon. While we remember it, the subsequent coverage of the event has, in crucial ways, taught us to remember the loss of Christa McAuliffe, the "teacher in space," for many of the wrong reasons.

Linked to the education reform movement of the 1980s, McAuliffe's participation on Challenger was an important building block in the Reagan administration's effort to publicize its commitment to a linkage between high-technology/national security considerations and the new reform. Like many aspects of the reform movement itself, McAuliffe's participation in the mission was a star-crossed effort, with more rhetorical than legitimate meaning.

Yet the swirl of rhetoric has obscured the fact that McAuliffe's tragic loss is emblematic of the extent to which the instrumental uses of education have come to predominate in the current reform climate. I will discuss how, for example, the failure of the shuttle, like the failure of the American industrial enterprise, is remembered as a technical problem (O-rings) which have technical solutions, when the deep meaning of the disaster is the breakdown of industrial democracy and the weakness of will to face real problems in light of short-term financial pressures.

This study is intended to let the story of the Challenger shed light on the character and ideals of American public education. The Challenger accident, while widely understood as further proof of our "rising tide of mediocrity," is in fact further proof of how far we have drifted from democratic ideals and from the importance of an education that prepares the way for and embodies the ideals of criticism and free inquiry. Furthermore, the fact that this could be so easily lost on the public at large is further evidence of the power of ideology to reify false constructs in favor of a convenient national amnesia concerning what is truly "at risk" in this nation.

Of all the sour elements that came from the era of 1980s education reform, nothing, in my estimation, parallels the injustice done to McAuliffe, nor to the vocation that her shuttle participation was intended to glorify. She has been made the namesake of dozens of technology-in-education awards, given honor as a hero of education reform, and used to promote the very educational impulse that her untimely death should have been used to question—the notion that this nation is "at risk" because of a failure of technology. Nothing could be further from the truth. It becomes, at once, an argument of calculation and a mythological venture. It went up like a great, grim roman candle, and, as it exploded, inscribed a great Y in the blue Florida sky—Y—Why? So sharp in memory because it was doomed. So Roman in its service to imploding empire.

The metaphor of Challenger gives access to a critique and analysis of the contradictions between the symbol of Challenger and the teacher in space and the actual character of educational enterprise as an adjunct of the state in the 1980s

reform climate. This is an opportunity to follow Douglas Kellner's advice to uncover an historical episode in a synthesis of social theory and cultural critique.[4]

This symbolic analysis employs methods from Jacque Ellul and from Hannah Arendt in their emphasis on the power of propaganda and bureaucracy to structure reason in the service of authoritarian purposes.[5] It employs methods suggested by Baudrillard's analysis of simulation and society and Breton's liberatory methods of chance through surrealism, by suggesting the need to recover the power of the symbolic as an intellectually liberatory force.[6]

Fame and Exploitation

McAuliffe was born on September 2, 1948, to Edward and Grace Corrigan in Boston, Massachusetts, the oldest of five children. One account of her life asks us to visualize Christa as a child in 1961 watching the first American space flight, remarking to a classmate that she wished she could go up there, too. She was chosen for her ability to represent the space program and carry its educational message. Her fame was precisely the result of her characteristic as an exemplar of the ordinary American teacher.

From the beginning, the Challenger mission attempted to capitalize on the high profile of education reform which was then in full swing. Francis (Dick) Scobee, the mission commander, would comment that "no matter what happens on this mission, it's going to be known as the teacher mission. We feel that's good, because people will remember what we do."[7] It would not be too strong to say that the best values of the teaching profession were exploited to the purposes of advertising the education reform movement and using its momentum to mobilize support for the space program in the bargain. In the first place, McAuliffe had no function on the shuttle beyond her responsibility to advertise it and the purposes of the education reform. The campaign to put a teacher in space was "part of NASA's continuing public relations effort to create space stars to help win national and international support—and more congressional funding—for the shuttle program."[8] It was also partly the result of the Reagan administration trying to appeal to a "hostile teacher's union, (and who,) during his re-election campaign, pledged that the first citizen passenger would be a teacher."[9]

This program is emblematic of the ironic, intensified de-professionalization of teaching which accompanied the rhetoric of the 1980s education reform. In the heart of the educational excellence movement, McAuliffe was selected despite what was termed a "weak resume" compared to the other ten finalists. Her selection was, in great part, based on her possession of "the intangibles"—she was..."wholesome, a churchgoer, a jogger, a mother of two...she was even pretty."[10] Significantly, of the ten finalists, only two were teachers of mathematics or science. There was clearly no effort to bring actual expertise into space; rather, the effort was to select, through a veritable talent show, the person who could seem

most like the archetypal reform-era teacher.

The hyperbole of the reform years has obscured the actual work lives many teachers experience. Despite the threats to their control, as they always have, many good teachers have used stealth and quiet determination to maintain their professional integrity. Despite the perception of her "weak" resume, McAuliffe's quiet resistance to the alienating demands of the "talent contest" and her subsequent activities on the shuttle becomes clear. In one of her interviews she says, "I think the reason I went into teaching was because I wanted to make an impact on other people and to have that impact on myself. I think I learn sometimes as much from my students as they learn from me."[11] Yet, despite what was to be her growing insistence that she be represented for who she is and what she does as a teacher, the overarching imperatives of the "show" were to subsume her resistance to being used as a showpiece. It also undermined her, or anyone's, ability to determine the extent of the real risks that were developing. And the show would go on.

On July 29, 1985, McAuliffe would watch nervously with the rest of the nation as the "Challenger," on an earlier flight, would be required to abort after an engine failure. She would console herself in an interview: "Just think of those early astronauts in those capsules who had no buttons to push. They had no control over their destiny if something went wrong. Today's program is a very safe program, so I'm not nervous. I'd just like them to get all the kinks out of it before I get on it."[12] Later, on the day of that interview, Roger Boisjoly, an engineer for Morton Thiokol, Inc., the company that manufactured the shuttle's booster rockets, wrote a memorandum to senior management, warning of problems in the O-rings, the rubber and putty seals between the solid rocket booster's field joints. "It is my honest and very real fear," he wrote, "that if we do not take immediate action to dedicate a team to solve the problem...then we stand in jeopardy of losing a flight, along with all the launch pad facilities,...The result would be a catastrophe of the highest order—loss of human life."[13] Robert Hohler notes ironically that, "Christa knew nothing about the memo. She knew only that Challenger was safely in orbit and that in less than twenty-four hours she faced her most rigorous test of the summer—a visit with Johnny Carson."—[Christa was being primed as the biggest advertising coup of the Space agency's history. Johnny, in the sweet manner he usually reserved for child stars, kindly suggested Christa's real function,]—"I think NASA made a very good choice," he said, "because I think you can communicate this to most of us who really can't understand all of it. You're really excited to go, huh?"[14]

All during her preparation as double-duty advertisement for the shuttle program and education reform, McAuliffe steadily protested her assigned role as space actress. She often clashed with the education coordinator, Bob Mayfield, a "science teacher from Texas who chafed at working with a social studies teacher from New Hampshire. 'This would be a lot easier if she knew science,' he said

midway through the training. 'We don't speak the same vocabulary....' Worse, the science demonstrations excited Mayfield the most and meant the least to Christa."[15] She was interested in the implications of her participation as a social studies teacher. She wanted to teach the televised lessons her way. When asked to read a scripted lesson, she refused, saying, "This isn't a stage play,...teachers don't need speeches. All they need is a lesson plan and their students. It's worked for ages on Earth, and there's no reason why it shouldn't work up there."[16] The fact that a history teacher was chosen in a talent contest to teach a scripted science lesson in outer space tells more about the lack of seriousness in the teacher-in-space project and about the twisted meaning of professionalization in the era of 1980s reform.

Advertising

While McAuliffe avoided the script, she could not see the part she was playing in a long-standing space commercial campaign. In "Selling the Moon: The U. S. Manned Space Program and the Triumph of Commodity Scientism," Michael L. Smith argues that the manned "space project's social function and presentation techniques approximated those of the most highly developed communication medium in American culture: advertising."[17] McAuliffe became a part of the long line of image-making techniques to enhance the palatability of the space program. Like other scientific advances capable of drifting behind what Marcuse called the "technological veil," the government space agencies and the media both depended on the arousal of human interest to project importance on a policy whose benefits were obscure and whose entertainment value was limited to the short-lived thrill of watching people in puffy suits of Reynolds wrap, tumbling stiffly through a void.

The American public had grown used to the perception that technology was justified in part by its entertainment value and in part by its ability to fulfill the promise of a better life. "For Cape Canaveral as well as Madison Avenue, the task was to link certain public expectations of technology with the product or event in question."[18] One prominent feature of both the revolutions in aviation and advertising was the appearance of what Smith has called the "helmsman" image. Smith argues that Lindberg is the first prominent helmsman developed in this century to bring legitimation to any product or process. The Leo Burnett company's invention of the ruggedly independent Marlboro Man is another example of this concept paving the way for the creation of the "astronaut."[19] The astronaut provided the required personalization of space, despite the fact that space science could proceed quite well in an automated form. However, this is a space whose uses were increasingly being identified with the conquest of **conceptual** territory, in the absence of the ability to conquer real space during a very tense but very "cold" war.

McAuliffe, while not the classic helmsman, has clearly been put in the service of an image of personalized, domesticated space, which, like all other space

efforts, was argued to bring benefits unconnected to the actual mission. Educational "excellence" was supported for its tangential connection to the long-range goal of increased productivity in a competitive "post-industrial" economy. Thus was the teacher in space only tangentially connected to the flight. She becomes an archetypal "helmsperson," like her earthbound counterpart, full-time wife/mother, full-time teacher: a space domestic, who would project the sharp American lady teacher image around the world. While she resisted all the image-mongering, she was still shaped to personalize both space and education reform in one deft ad-age stroke. Her projected image appears here to support an illusion of rugged individualism, which, if Horkheimer was correct, was required to provide moral and ideological support, while the independent economic subject was being eliminated in commodity-drunk late capitalism. Richard Brosio reminds us how Horkheimer, Marcuse, and other Frankfurt school theorists highlighted how instrumental reason cut the deep rift between science and ethics. This rift is no better illustrated than by an examination of image and metaphor imbedded in state-dominated military/scientific technology.[20] Had McAuliffe lived, Warhol might have made her image into wallpaper.

At the same time that reform reports were highlighting the industrial productivity failures and blaming them on mediocre education, the shuttle program was under similar pressure to demonstrate its own productivity. There was increased pressure to produce more launches, more efficiently, and on a tight schedule. Martin Carnoy has shown how deceptive was the call for productivity increases in the context of high-tech industry.[21] What might result in a high quality education for the research and development class making up the pre-production end of this revolution might just as well result in a mediocre standard set for that class engaged in the production end of the micro-electronics industry and in the burgeoning service sector of the so-called "flexible" economy.

Christine Shea highlights the nature of the contradictions of education reform, obscuring the class conflict inherent in it. Indeed, the call for equity and excellence—higher performance standards for all—is curious, given that the global marketplace and multinational corporations are dismembering the traditional source of working-class jobs. The craft/industrial center is being redistributed globally. Unquestioned allegiance to the high-tech labor force and higher productivity/profitability standards will work to immiserate the growing white-collar working class through increased inter-class job competition and lower salaries, and to further disempower the secondary service labor force.[22]

Quality products, and a quality education for their design, are only part of the reform story. The other part is the increase in sales promotion of a shoddy shuttle product based on deception, image making, and managerial slave-driving of overworked engineers. The shuttle embodies high-quality science, engineering expertise, and image/ad driven prerogatives that bordered on bathos. In this case, "sales" are shuttle launches, a sale based on the image, the pitch, and the close.

Propaganda

In remembering the Challenger explosion, I am struck by the memory of the incredible violence of the explosion. It seemed at that time that minor things went wrong often: an oxygen leak, a computer malfunction, those delays and inconveniences we became used to. For the shuttle to simply disintegrate, blow up, was unthinkable, almost ludicrous. What followed this extremity was televised silence, and where there was not silence, there was only the crackle of NASA jargon. "WE HAVE NEGATIVE CONTACT,—LOSS OF DOWNLINK," "THERE APPEARS TO BE A MAJOR MALFUNCTION," etc. It is in the intersection of violence, bureaucratic language, and myth that the full meaning of this event might teach us yet if we look.

Not since the moon landings had so many people been turned to a space launch as they were for Challenger 51-L. "From the Virgin Islands to an Eskimo village in the Arctic Circle, they waited—two and a half million students and their teachers, among them Christa's colleagues and most of the class of 51-L...One of the finalist's, Charlie Sposato's, class prepared for the launch by studying Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*."[23] *Dr. Strangelove* might have been more appropriate for the events that would unfold.

The effects of this disastrous event and its aftermath are elegantly described by an application of Jacques Ellul's venerable but sturdy propaganda model. Ellul showed how subtle and flexible propaganda can be, as an expression of totalizing state objectives.[24] Ellul argued that propaganda has become necessary, in much the same way that advertising has. It is not a stream of false information produced to deceive. It is rather a functional managerial tool used to interpret reality for the masses. As such, it acts to streamline a potentially "chaotic" political or consumer response. Since production depends on orderly information management, management is required; complex information is counter-productive.[25]

For Ellul, propaganda is necessary in the exercise of secretive power. Information control and image-making are essential to insure predictable political outcomes and resilient belief structures, and to manage public responses. A glance at some of the press releases and magazine treatments just after the explosion reveals something of the controlled uses of information which, characteristically, made the major news media impotent to objectively study the situation when their main business had been, in the months prior to launch, as boosters for the Teacher-In-Space Club. At that time, Steve Daley of the *Chicago Tribune*, wrote a newspaper column called, "On Television," perhaps for those who missed TV the day before, much like, I suppose, the "In the News" shows on TV. In this he noted how "despite the drama, despite a steadfast effort all day long, as the networks waited for the promise of a late-afternoon news conference from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), it could likewise be argued that never had more network air time been filled with less information."[26] Daley quotes

ABC's Peter Jennings, "'If it sounds as if we're blathering on, it's because we are waiting for some word from NASA.'"[27]

We will always have with us the image of the exploded shuttle. We will also have the image of the media aftermath. We must live with the uncomfortable image of the media as servant of the state, waiting, blathering, while another state agency prepares the official response which would become news. What we would hear from NASA would be the beginning of the continuation of the Challenger myth, and McAuliffe would remain on stage as the lead character, not in the tragedy it was, but in a travel adventure. Malcolm McConnell has noted the "media love affair with the man-in-space adventure."[28] He cites William Booth's analysis of the NASA-media relationship which "details the media's infatuation with the space shuttle...dazzled by the space agency's image of technological brilliance,...space reporters spared NASA the thorough scrutiny that might have improved chances of averting a tragedy."[29] McConnell argues that it was NASA's bureaucratic evasiveness and duplicity which led the press off the trail of problems that were developing.

Ellul argues that propaganda must be able to "furnish an explanation for all happenings, a key to understand the whys and the reasons for economic and political developments."[30] Indeed, propaganda and bureaucracy are bedfellows in the development of this disaster. Propaganda need not be activated in the absence of an official need. In the case of the Challenger, the offices of NASA, Morton Thiokol, the contractor, and the Marshall Space flight center, working somewhat in concert, protecting their prerogatives, made possible the attenuation of information, the propaganda that led to the tragedy. As early as 1978, John Q. Miller, Marshall's chief of the Solid Rocket Booster Project, wrote memoranda which stated that the design of the field joints and O-ring assembly was "so hazardous that it could produce hot gas leaks and resulting catastrophic failure."[31] The problem had been noted at least **eight** years before the "accident," yet this was covered up in the effort to proceed smoothly. In November, 1981, the Orbiter Columbia was discovered to have badly eroded field joints after flight. Marshall director William Lucas's people decided to keep the problem within the confines of the Marshall-Thiokol reporting channels, and away from the national shuttle office in Houston and the associate administrator in Washington.[32] Lucas himself, as the single-minded taskmaster of the project, appears as Ellul's "monolithic individual....(who will) have rationalizations not only for past actions, but for the future as well. He marches forward with full assurance of his righteousness. He is formidable in his equilibrium, all the more so because it is very difficult to break his harness of justifications."[33]

Ellul's model emphasizes that propaganda can effectively rest on a claim that some "fact is **untrue** which may actually **be true** but is difficult to prove."[34] The dangers present in the shuttle field joint design were present but "difficult to prove." This difficulty would be compounded in the bureaucratic political pressure

which NASA had placed on itself. The launch productivity pressure was particularly great on the day of the disaster. NASA had included a contribution to the President's State of the Union Address, which he would read to a rapt audience as the shuttle whirled in orbit, waiting for its lesson from space the next morning. It read in part, "Tonight, while I am speaking to you, a young elementary school teacher (sic, she was not an elementary school teacher) from Concord, New Hampshire, is taking us all on the ultimate field trip as she orbits the Earth as the first citizen passenger on the Space Shuttle."[35] The speech promoted the space program and connected its imperatives with the "'bright tomorrow that high technology would bring to increasingly stable and prosperous American families...Christa McAuliffe epitomized this optimistic theme.'"[36] Indeed, McAuliffe unwittingly became a surrogate propagandist. She is the "middle-class recruit" Ellul deemed necessary for the appropriate communicative power. In this she is not unlike the host of mid-American farm boys, the John Glenns and Neil Armstrongs, whose helmsmanship was so essential to the communication of this process toward a middle-American audience.[37] The accessibility of these helmspersons as models satisfies the persistent need of mass man to connect, to alleviate the loneliness and isolation of contemporary life. People need, due to their alienation, to "believe and obey, to create and hear fables, to communicate in the language of myths."[38]

Indeed, the myth of the fallen hero, the only ill fate that can befall a helmsman, was continued in the moments after the explosion and helped to manage its political impact. This modern tragedy rests not with the hero's tragic flaw, but in the machine's. McAuliffe's is almost a surreal presence reassuring our acquiescence. Rather than a helmsperson in control or her fate, she became like the high-tech white-collar working class who was to symbolize the quintessential techno-serf.

The surrealists had suggested the liberatory potential in these kinds of "bizarre juxtapositions" and how our chance contact with an external object may remind us of ourselves, more than anything that takes place in the impoverished life of our conscious will. The obscene Y in the sky, the presence of a teacher in space, of all places, gives us the opportunity, if we take it, to catapult out of the vast network of "pseudo-satisfactions that make up the market system."[39] Her image managers might have said "she's not an astronaut but she plays one on TV" and valorize her participation by video caveat. We may, in a split second, see the absurdity in seeing this explosion as an accident. Andre Breton was convinced that we must take the opportunity to see the importance of chance and the automatic to reveal the outlines of our chains.[40] By the time of the first anniversary of the disaster, we were being asked to observe a period of silence for the astronauts, who "paid the ultimate price for the mistakes of others."[41] Duplicity would become "mistakes," ill-designed O-rings, cheaters' proof of our technological unpreparedness. A year after the explosion *Aviation Week and Space Technology* would argue, "The emphasis has to be on correcting the design deficiencies in the shuttle system....without

diminishing the importance of the ceremony; however, care must be taken not to dwell on the Challenger loss to the point that it reopens old wounds or turns the anniversary observance into a time of recriminations, renewed criticism of NASA or calls for the U.S. to abandon its efforts to conquer the space frontier."[42] This reminds us of the wider effort to shape public perceptions regarding the meaning of the disaster. We are reminded that the task of memory is to reinforce how the shuttle **failure** must be understood as part of the phenomenon which, **had it succeeded**, would also have advertised the need for better high-technology products and processes.

Bureaucracy and Violence

The Challenger incident is a story that reflects the nature of truth in a bureaucratic culture. Charles Peters identifies the shuttle's problems in the heart of several intertwined bureaucratic cultures: at Morton Thiokol, at the Marshall Space Flight Center, and at NASA. Bureaucracies and the propaganda they generate become the locus for the development of pertinent information. Hannah Arendt's brilliant analysis of violence leads us back along the path of bureaucratic propaganda to a place where information creates no truth and where no one may be held responsible for the evil that lies generate. The inevitability of the violent shuttle explosion and the jargon and silence that followed are an emblem of her analysis. Bureaucracy, she wrote, is "rule of an intricate system of bureaus in which no men, neither one nor the best, neither the few nor the many, can be held responsible, and which could be properly called rule by Nobody...rule by Nobody is clearly the most tyrannical of all, since there is no one left who could even be asked to answer for what was being done."[43]

Arendt wanted to make a distinction between power and violence. She said that power is more closely related to authority, where those in control have the assumed respect of the ruled. Power becomes violence when it assumes a completely instrumental character. The "implements of violence, like all other natural tools, are designed and used for the purpose of multiplying natural strength until, in the last stage of their development, they can substitute for it."[44] Violence is power used in the absence of vested authority.

The uses of propaganda by themselves assume no particularly violent character. However, in the case of the shuttle disaster, we may witness a process of incremental rationalization, in which bureaucracy serves to mobilize this instrument of the space program, its machines and techniques, further away from democratic accountability. Bureaucracy becomes the conduit for the development of power used in the absence of vested authority. The so-called shuttle "accident" embodies this definition of violence.

Peters writes an account of the nature of this process. He notes that the bad "news" of shuttle design flaws simply lost its power as information because it ran

counter to the logic of productivity that had come to dominate the program. Engineers "felt it was their job to solve problems, not burden the boss with them."[45] He quotes Paul Cloutier, a professor of Space Physics: "'The game NASA is playing is the maximum tonnage per year at the minimum costs possible,'" and also quotes a *Newsweek* report stating "'some high officials don't want to hear about problems.'"[46]

Peters's analysis is consistent with Ellul's discussion of leadership personality. "Every organization has a tendency to believe its own PR—NASA's walls are lined with glamorizing posters and photographs of the shuttle and other space machines—and usually the top man is the most thoroughly seduced because, after all, it reflects the most glory on him."[47] He goes on to cite the pressure NASA put on itself by encouraging the President's people to include a teacher-in-space reference in his State of the Union Address. "NASA officials must have feared they were about to lose a PR opportunity of stunning magnitude, an opportunity to impress not only the media and the public but the agency's two most important constituencies, the White House and the Congress. Wouldn't you feel pressure to get that launch off this morning so that the President could talk about it tonight?"[48]

NASA's George Hardy is described telling Thiokol engineers who were terrified at the effect of this cold weather on field joint integrity that he was, "appalled by their verbal recommendation that the launch be postponed.....Thiokol, which Hardy well knew was worried about losing its shuttle contract, was in effect being told, 'don't tell me' or 'don't tell me officially so I won't have to pass bad news along and my bosses will have deniability.'"[49] Peters argues the pivotal role played by bureaucracy in bringing on the violence embodied in this disaster.[50]

Boisjoly reported that Morton Thiokol's mangagement style would not let anything compete or interfere with "the production and shipping of its boosters. The result was a program which gave the appearance of being controlled, while actually collapsing from within."[51] Engineers were forbidden to speak up at Thiokol meetings, and..."told to keep silent when NASA representatives were at the plant."[52] A resignation letter from Chistina Ferrari, an employee in structures design, indicated severe safety problems at the Thiokol Wasatch plant. Engineer Steve Agee noted that before he left, he had written over 200 critical hazard reports, all of which were ignored by a Thiokol safety professional.[53] He also cited the "reckless use of waivers and deviations," normal processes to speed up production which were bought by the hundreds by NASA while he was there. "NASA....needed waivers and deviations like a drug addict needs his drugs."[54] A "SAY NO TO WAIVERS AND DEVIATIONS" campaign might have been more beneficial, in retrospect, for the moral safety of America's schoolchildren than the current slogan.

Thiokol "was even able to successfully petition NASA to affect formal closure of the O-Ring problem—i.e., its elimination from Marshall's monthly Problems Reports. The Thiokol request was based on strange logic: tests leading to a safe

redesign were under way; therefore, the problem was being addressed; therefore, it was no longer an 'open' problem. The incredible request worked....Only five days before the Challenger accident, a Marshall message indicated that the 'problem is considered closed.'"[55]

Indeed, two others emerge as persons who questioned the instrumental bureaucratic rationality of Thiokol safety decisions, Thiokol engineer Boisjoly and Arnold Thompson, supervisor of Rocket Motor Cases. Thompson and Boisjoly argued vehemently, both through memoranda and at the infamous teleconference set up the evening before scheduled launch to discuss concerns. These engineers argued in an hour-long presentation that the seals would be in certain jeopardy should launch take place in such cold temperatures as were predicted. The consensus testimony at the Roger's Commission Hearings is that Marshall's director of the Solid Rocket Booster Project's, Larry Mulloy, response to their no-launch recommendation was unusually heated. "My God, Thiokol," he argued, "when do you want me to launch, next April?"[56] Indeed, the high-tech teleconference, which could have resulted in launch delay, was "far different from a neutral assessment of data...mutual deception lay at the heart of the exchange between NASA and Morton Thiokol. The men from Marshall wanted their launch to proceed on schedule and would listen to no reasonable argument that recommended delay. The Thiokol managers overruled their engineering experts to satisfy a demanding customer."[57]

The heart of bureaucratic rationality is revealed in the moment when Thompson and Boisjoly desperately reemphasized the crucial nature of their recommendations, Thompson frantically drawing mock-joint assemblies, Boisjoly "grabbing a pile of photographs to show the serious erosion on flight 51-C."[58] At this point, Jerald Mason, senior vice-president of Thiokol's Wasatch operation, asked Bob Lund, Thiokol's vice president of engineering, to "**take off your engineering hat and put on your management hat**."[59] This request clearly implies an epistemic switch from truths which can effect flight safety to "truths" which can effect company market position, with a demanding customer on the line. It is this instrumental switch that lies at the heart of the Challenger incident. There was simply nothing accidental about it. And we must be reminded that in return for a ten million dollar reduction in award fees, all charges against Thiokol were dropped, and not one of the managers who made the decision to launch was fired.[60]

Away from Goodness: A Conclusion

There is certainly a bitter irony in this fact, that in the heart of the so-called information age, one can know so little that is actually true about such an important and so public an event. What I'm left with are the flashes of understanding amid a contradictory and frightening reality. Recall the multiple efforts to manage what was called "the grief" of the young after this event. As if only mourning, and not

anger, was the possible emotion to feel. Arendt reminds us, "absence of emotions neither causes nor promotes rationality...Detachment and equanimity [in view of] unbearable tragedy can indeed be terrifying, namely when they are not the result of control but an evident manifestation of incomprehension."[61]

During the 1980s we were led to believe the argument that our technique was failing and our productivity suffered as a result of the "rising tide of mediocrity." Ronald Reagan's White House statement to the ten Challenger teacher contest finalists rang with this theme and sounded an irony ominously prescient for not only the disaster that would follow, but the propaganda that would teach us its meaning. "You save our past," he said, "from being consumed by forgetfulness and our future from being engulfed in ignorance,...when one of you blasts off from Cape Canaveral next January, you will represent hope and opportunity and possibility; you will be the emissary to the next generation of American heroes. And your message will be that our progress, impressive as it is, is only just a beginning; that our achievements, as great as they are, are only a launching pad into the future. Flying up above the atmosphere, you'll be able to truly say that our horizons are not our limits, only new frontiers to be explored."[62]

David Purpel cites Reinhold Niebuhr, who said, "Educators, as well as other middle-class moralists, underestimate the conflict of interest in political and economic relations."[63] Education reform in the 1980s worked to further obscure this conflict by mystifying the meaning and potential of high technology to better lives across class categories. In fact, the core curriculum and revised standards of excellence tend to eliminate efforts to distribute reflective, critical literacy across social and school classes. As Purpel notes, those equalitarian, redistributive efforts which had some potential to be socially and politically significant—open admissions, politically and socially "relevant" studies, multi-cultural studies, pre-school and compensatory education—have all come under some form of attack from conservative school reforms.[64] Despite the rhetoric of excellence, the "New Basics" of education reform emphasizes intensified traditional curriculum with meritocratic presuppositions likely to prevent all students from participating in reflective thinking and awareness. Excellence mediates social conflict by redefining pedagogy in service of technical, not civic, competence. The democratic potential, the emancipatory power of reflection, is muted in the intoxication of space spectacle, automation, computerspeak, and high-class education as a sort of pledge period best endured by those students who already know the rules of the fraternity.

Svi Shapiro discusses the recommendations of the National Commission on Excellence in Education which argued for intensified state intervention to increase the productivity of education. He also discusses the National Task Force on Education for Economic Growth which refined this call by focusing rhetoric around the demands of competition. Whatever arguments exist for citizenship education and civic literacy are muted by the demand for results in the market-

place. In the same way, the ethical purposes of democratic life are twisted in the service of bureaucrats and production quotas. Civic life eschews reflection on the ends of production, replaced by an intoxication with means.[65] Central to the 1980s reform effort was a conservative effort to "control cultural symbols and meanings...given the overwhelming power of corporate interests to manufacture and manipulate culture."[66] One cannot help but note the way Challenger is a graphic example of the management of illusion and spectacle characterizing an important link in the cynical reform agenda. We would be left with a different story in a nation that took seriously the nature of its real risks and the way education can help. The national memory that did justice to McAuliffe would remind us of the intensity of her insistence that she maintain control over her participation. We only see glimmers of this, however, as when we are reminded how "despite the fact that NASA's excellent public relations department, who could have provided her class with reams of material to teach from while she was competing for the shuttle spot, she refused to rely on them."[67] This, plus her fight to overrule the script developed for her, are an emblem of the person and the teacher she must have been.

I remember reflecting with vague unease that I would have to step on a jetliner to get to Florida for the delivery of this paper, not far from where the Challenger sat on its last launch site. I remember waiting, at times edgily, anticipating the air travel I've never relished. It is at this point that McAuliffe's courage, to place herself at the nose of a Space Shuttle, becomes palpable. Note a passage from McConnell: "Throughout the banter that morning, Judy Resnik and Ellison Onizuka had been the most jocular....Onizuka rolled to his left (to get a look at the liquid oxygen vent arm retract) 'Doesn't it go the other way?' He quipped. A flight test engineer with more than a thousand hours in advanced aircraft, Ellison was famous for his irreverent attitude toward high-tech hardware....There goes the beanie cap, said Scobee....Since the first communication checks two hours earlier, Christa McAuliffe had been silent."[68] Silent. I have to conclude that McAuliffe, by her inexperience, was, as anyone would be, anxious, perhaps even frightened. After five years, I am still in awe at her immense courage; more courage, because of her inexperience, than any other of her crewmates, who were no slouches in that department either.

In those things, it seems to me, lay the proper honor of her memory. She should not continue in posterity to serve as a propaganda surrogate. Her story and the story of the Challenger disaster speak clearly of that which is truly at risk in America today. The disaster was caused by the fear and duplicity of managers with more than enough math-science education to design a safe field joint, but not the kind of education which enables one to summon the courage or insight to separate launch pressures from the real dangers present on the launch pad that frigid day. It is perhaps for the same reason that the true quality of American life has declined in more ways than can be linked to Japanese industrial competition. There was certainly a rising tide of something. After a careful study of this event and its

meaning for education, mediocrity is not the word which comes first to mind.

McAuliffe's real risk, the one that might really teach us something, has been obscured—that it was not engineering skill that was lacking and caused the real danger. We may reflect that her high achievement as a social studies teacher was put aside in favor of her "girl-next-door" wholesomeness. Perhaps judges felt that her intellect would not as likely get in the way of her readily acquiescing to the script. If they thought that, they were wrong. If truth would be told about the value of the Challenger lesson, it would be partly in her courage, and in her firm resistance, despite her resume, to the script and the "Public Relations" hyperbole. The legitimate story would be that America is not at risk because it lacks engineering and high-tech skill, but because it has a shortage of an education to shape and reward engineers like Boisjoly, Ferrari, and Thompson, and an excess of an education and a bureaucratic culture which promotes and rewards a Mulloy and a Lucas.

It would be, and, painfully remains, McAuliffe's job to boost education reform in the service of the high-tech revolution. She was to de-mystify space for the ordinary person. For a society which has commodified educational values by a process of propaganda, bureaucracy, and the attendant violence of state information monopolies, it was McAuliffe's job to de-mystify space for Americans. In America, space is not the mystery.

Notes

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1. "A Teacher in Space Crams for Classroom in Orbit," *Life*, Dec. 1985.
2. *Report of the Presidential Commission on the Space Shuttle Challenger Accident*. Washington, DC: 1986, p.89.
3. Sun Ra is a musician who realized the purpose of space a number of years ago.
4. Douglas Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.
5. See, Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1970. Also, Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965.
6. Kellner, p. 232. See, Douglas Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989. Baudrillard's discussion of simulation and the surrogate in social presentation is a particularly useful adjunct to Ellul. See also, Franklin Rosemont, *Andre Breton: What is Surrealism*. New York: Monad, 1978. Surrealism provides the impetus for us to take chance juxtapositions and symbolic occurrences for their intellectually liberatory potential. With this encouragement, the "Challenger" narrative becomes potent as social metaphor.
7. *New York Times Magazine*, Jan. 5, 1986, p. 19.
8. *Maclean's Magazine*, Feb 10, 1986, p. 26.

9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. Robert T. Hohler, *"I Touch the Future...": The Story of Christa McAuliffe* New York: Random House, 1986, p. 72.
12. *Ibid.*, p.141.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. Hohler, p. 170-71.
16. *Ibid.* p. 171.
17. See, Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears, *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980.* New York: Pantheon, 1983, p. 177, pp. 177-209.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 184-185.
20. Richard Brosio, *The Frankfurt School: An Analysis of the Contradictions and Crises of Liberal Capitalist Societies.* Ball State University Monograph #29, 1980, p. 17.
21. Martin Carnoy, "High Technology and Education: An Economist's View," in Steven Tozer and Kenneth D. Benne (editors), *Society as Educator in an Age of Transition.* Chicago, IL: National Society for the Study of Education, University of Chicago Press, 1987.
22. Christine M. Shea, "Pentagon vs. Multinational Capitalism: The Political Economy of the 1980's School Reform Movement," in Christine M. Shea, Ernest Kahane, and Peter Sola (editors), *The New Servants of Power: A Critique of the 1980's School Reform Movement.* New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990, p. 19.
23. Hohler, p. 252.
24. Ellul, 1965.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 121-122.
26. *Chicago Tribune,* Jan. 29, 1986, p. 6.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Malcolm McConnell, *Challenger: A Major Malfunction.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987, p. 83.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 118-19.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
33. Ellul, p. 165.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
35. McConnell, p. 22.
36. *Ibid.*, P. 23.
37. Ellul, p. 106.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
39. Frederic Jameson, *Marxism and Form.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971.
40. Rosemont, p. 71.
41. *Aviation Week and Space Technology,* Jan 26, 1987, p. 13.
42. *Ibid.*
43. Arendt, p. 38.

44. Arendt, p. 46.
45. Charles Peters, "From Ouagadougou to Cape Canaveral: Why the Bad News Doesn't Travel Up," *The Washington Monthly*, April, 1986, pp.27-31.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
51. "Two Minutes," *Financial World*, June 27, 1989, p. 29, pp. 28-32.
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
54. *Ibid.*
55. McConnell, p. 181.
56. *Ibid.*, p.196.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 203.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
61. Arendt, p. 64.
62. Hohler, p. 89.
63. David Purpel, *The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education: A Curriculum for Justice and Compassion in Education*. New York: Bergin and Garvey, 1989. p. 14.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
65. Svi Shapiro, *Between Capitalism and Democracy: Educational Policy and the Crisis of the Welfare State*. New York: Bergin and Garvey, 1990. p. 130.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
67. "Town that Remembers," *Ladies Home Journal*, p. 150.
68. McConnell, p. 238.

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Rethinking the Concept of "The Popular" in Critical and Poststructural Social and Educational Theory

By Maureen Stout

Part I

The notions of "popular culture," "the popular," and "popular education" have recently been given increasing prominence in critical social and educational theory. In both theoretical and empirical studies of advanced capitalist societies and less developed societies, particularly Latin America, much attention has focused on the so-called "new social movements." In North America and Western Europe, the focus on popular movements has been primarily on the impact of the technological and communications revolution vis-a-vis the popular sectors, and the class-based identity of those sectors. In Latin America, on the other hand, "the popular" has a unique social history and political character. In a region characterized by historically-stratified social classes, political and economic

Maureen Stout is a doctoral candidate in philosophy of education and comparative education at the University of California, Los Angeles.

disparities between rural and urban sectors, and a political history of repressive dictatorships and revolutionary and counter-revolutionary movements, the concept of "the popular" is used to refer to class and status-group based social movements and the ideology of these groups vis-a-vis the ideology and politics of the dominant social sectors.

In this paper, I explore the concept of "the popular" as it might relate to the context of less developed countries, in particular Latin America. I will use the tools of poststructuralist literary theory to elaborate a notion of "the popular" that offers a new conceptualization of this phenomenon, by explicitly incorporating a sense of the competing identities and ideologies that form it. This paper is primarily a conceptual analysis; one that goes beyond contemporary critical theory in an attempt to clarify the conceptual framework in which the terms "popular," "popular culture," and "popular education" are used with reference to social and cultural movements in society at large and in the classroom.

Although this work draws heavily from poststructural literary theory, it is grounded in contemporary critical and "postmodern" cultural criticism and a fundamental part of this discussion is to explore how a marriage of "poststructural" literary theory and "postmodern" social theory can be instructive in this sort of analysis. "Postmodern" critical theory often makes use of concepts and principles from postructuralist literary theory, but the debt is rarely admitted, and the theory ill-understood. This paper is in part an attempt to clarify the very complex relations between the two systems. The inspiration for this approach came from the belief that the concept "the popular" has heretofore been insufficiently theorized, and, as Raymond Morrow notes, conventional Marxist, or even "post-Marxist" theoretical formulations may not be immediately applicable to the Latin American context. As he suggests in his article "Post-Marxism, Postmodernism and Popular Education in Latin America," "it is problematic to assume that such theoretical developments, which have been both highly contested and oriented toward issues specific to advanced, liberal democratic capitalism, should be automatically--or without significant revisions--applied to Latin American social formations" (1990, 3).

In order to provide a conceptual context to this discussion, I first describe several conceptualizations of "the popular," beginning with Gramsci's discussion of popular culture.[1] I then discuss contemporary analyses from both Latin American and North American scholars. I will suggest that a reconceptualization from the perspective of poststructural literary theory, in concert with aspects of current critical theory, can help to begin to create a notion of "the popular" that is sufficiently elastic to include the complex political/ideological dynamic of popular movements in Latin America and the multiplicity of actors that make up those movements. Here "the popular" is considered as constitutive of an ideological narrative of multiple subject positions, open to deconstruction, which will reveal not only the relations between "signifiers"--the individual subjects--but the

processes of both hegemony and counter-hegemony that function to perpetuate the myth of "the popular" as representing a single, unified discourse. It is thus an attempt to examine "the narrative structure of forms of critical consciousness" (Morrow 1990, 21) in a conceptualization that could form the basis of a praxis of liberation.

I first discuss Gramsci's notion of "the popular," with particular reference to his conception of ideological hegemony and the philosophy of praxis, and then trace the development of Gramsci's theory in the work of Nestor Garcia Canclini (1982, 1988), Armand Mattelart (1983), and Ernesto Laclau (1977). I then outline elements of Lacan's psychoanalysis from *Ecrits* (1977), the concept of deconstruction as described by Jacques Derrida (1974, 1977), and the notion of power in Foucault (1972, 1988) in an attempt to formulate a semiotics of "the popular" that the work of critical theorists Peter McLaren (1989), Henry Giroux (1989), and Raymond Morrow (1990) suggests, and which, I believe, indicates the possibilities for a conceptual analysis of "the popular" from a poststructural or "postmodern" perspective. From this polemic engagement with contemporary theorizing on "the popular," I will attempt to provide a conceptualization that, through the deconstruction of traditional oppositional formulae addresses the condition of "the popular" in Latin America. Where postmodern literary criticism deconstructs the dyads: critic/text and reader/text, this reconceptualization attempts to deconstruct the oppositions of theory/practice and subject/object in the interests of promoting a conceptual harmony between the analysis of "the popular" and its political and cultural discourse.

Part II

The notion of "the popular" in Gramsci is conceptually linked with his notion of ideological hegemony and the nature and role of the organic intellectual, both in the formation of blocs and in mediating relations between dominant and subordinate cultures, and his conceptualization provides the theoretical foundation for a contemporary analysis of "the popular." According to Gramsci, there are two major superstructural levels in society: civil and political. Civil society refers to an "ensemble of private organisms" (1971, 12), while the political superstructure refers to the state and its ideological apparatuses. Whereas the political superstructure reproduces itself primarily through coercive domination, civil society functions through cycles of hegemony. In practice, then, a regime (which involves both political and civil structures) sustains itself through a combination of coercion and persuasion, the latter called "ideological hegemony."

Ideological hegemony involves a whole range of structures and activities, systems of values and attitudes and morality (Boggs, 1976, 38) that effectively mystify real power relations while reproducing unequal social hierarchies. Hegemony is thus the "organizing principle" (Boggs, 39) of state and bourgeois control,

and is internalized by the masses as "common sense" and by elite intellectuals as part of a "scholastic programme" (Boggs, 39). Whereas traditional intellectuals are the products of a hegemonic system in the process of being superseded or challenged, organic intellectuals originate from both newly developing mainstream and "marginal" cultures, and to be an effective part of a counter-hegemonic movement, must articulate the common values and symbols of those cultures.

Organic intellectuals thus represent and embody the counter-hegemonic movement, and, as a group, articulate the collective consciousness of the popular. That collective consciousness can be harnessed into a coherent political force when it is formed into political, historical, and ideological "blocs" (Boggs, 80-81). These "blocs" are not merely social and political groupings, but constitute the creation of popular alliances that transcend class interests and organize around forces at work at a particular historical moment, representing the transformation of "popular consciousness" into political and ideological struggle. The revolutionary process in the Gramscian schema is, then, popular (or national-popular) in origin (Boggs, 83), and is, moreover, an educational process, as Gramsci believed education to be an important source of the diffusion of "counter-hegemony" amongst members of "the popular." This diffusion is achieved through the integration (through the mediation of organic intellectuals) of an already existent popular resistance into a theory and praxis of their consciousness of their role in history, with a view to uniting as active political subjects in a "revolutionary historical bloc." Gramsci thus viewed the education of "the popular" as both an intellectual and practical process, leading to a crisis of ideological hegemony characterized by organized, long-term resistance and competition between the dominant and subaltern strata.

Nestor Garcia Canclini critically evaluates the contribution of Gramsci to the conceptualization of "the popular," noting that following Gramsci "the popular conquers a new scientific and political place" (Canclini, 1982, 53).[2] Canclini considers Gramsci's connection of culture with hegemony conceptually useful in analyzing "the popular," particularly his argument for culture as an instrument for social reproduction and the fight for hegemony (1982, 53 & 37). Following Gramsci, Canclini argues that the popular can be identified through "a process of the unequal appropriation of economic and cultural capital by a nation...by part of its subaltern sectors, and by the comprehension, reproduction and transformation, real or symbolic, of the general and specific conditions of work and of life" (1982, 47).

Canclini is, however, critical of the term "the popular" as enforcing a monolithic interpretation of that sector, as he asserts that there is no one single group that can be identified as representative of "the popular," but many "popular sectors"--consisting of a multitude of diverse peoples and ideologies (1982, 47). He argues, moreover, that popular cultures do not exist "as metaphysical entities, a priori, but are formed through the interaction of social relations" (1982, 47). He

here goes further than Gramsci in emphasizing the dialectical relations both between dominant and dominated groups and in rejecting the formulation of a dualistic interpretation of the relations between the dominant and subaltern sectors, insisting that one must "take into account the inequalities and conflicts that permanently interrelate popular and hegemonic cultures" (1982, 54). According to Canclini, then, the popular cultures are the result of an unequal appropriation of cultural capital, "an elaboration of its (the popular's) conditions of life and a conflictual interaction with the hegemonic sectors" (1982, 49).

Ernesto Laclau (1977) also describes "the popular" and our conceptualization of it as embedded in processes of hegemony in theory and practice, and rejects the notion of "the popular" as embodying either a particular ideology or a fixed social class, or alliances of classes. According to Laclau, the dominant class retains its position first, by the articulation into its discourse of non-class contradictions and interpellations, and second, by the absorption of contents forming part of the ideological and political discourses of the dominated classes (Laclau, 1977, 162). Here "the popular" refers to the ideologically-mediated relations between the multiple subject positions of the dominated group(s) and between those groups and the hegemonic strata, and to the political processes by which those groups are interpreted and absorbed by the dominant. Although integrated into the hegemonic strata, the dominated, or popular, sectors can create a resistive or oppositional hegemony by precipitating a crisis in the dominant ideological discourse and "reduce its articulating principles to various estelechies without any connotative power over popular interpellations...and so develop the implicit antagonism of the latter to the point where 'the people' is completely unassimilable by any fraction of the power bloc" (Laclau, 1977, 195). What this means is that the individual subjects that are "the popular" form the points of intersection of a variety of contradictory discourses and may resist their absorption into the class categories of the hegemonic bloc by insisting on the (continually shifting) diversity of those discourses, thus preventing an irreversible assimilation of themselves as an objectified popular "bloc" into the dominant sectors.

Like Canclini and Laclau, Armand Mattelart (1983) asserts that "the popular" must no longer be defined as simply oppositional to hegemonic culture, but should be considered as "part of an incessant dialectic of popular and mass subject to the variations in the relations of force between subaltern classes and groups and hegemonic classes" (Mattelart, 1983, 24). Mattelart argues that Gramsci's notion of hegemony can only be properly elaborated by taking into account the multiplicity of social actors in the construction of a popular hegemony, defined in terms not of regulation and normalization of differences, but as an authorization and articulation of those differences and diversities (1983, 35).

Mattelart's analysis suggests a redefinition of "the popular" that places conceptual emphasis on the identity of its constituting subjects and their relationship to the larger political culture. The process whereby the popular sectors create

a collective identity is both open and embryonic, and continually disrupted by the ideological contradictions of its constituents (individuals) and its dialectical relationship with the dominant group. Thus "the popular" cannot be identified as representing a single subject position, but rather a multiplicity of intersecting subjective discourses, each with a unique political, cultural, and ideological character.

Part III

While the above discussion provides a conceptualization of "the popular" that frames it as both a component of, and resistant to, the hegemony of the dominant classes, it is necessary to further examine its character and functioning in dialectical relation to the dominant sectors. In other words, if, in attempting to define a conceptualization of "the popular" one emphasizes the multiple subject positions that constitute that popular, one must "deconstruct" the relations between those subjects and the hegemonic bloc of which they are, after all, a part, in order to then be able to reconstruct a complete picture of the complex relations within and between both sectors. Gramsci's notion of "ideological hegemony" as developed in Canclini, Laclau, and Mattelart is useful in rescuing analysis of "the popular" from an overly deterministic and economistic Marxist interpretation, but to be conceptualized with reference to the Latin American context it needs to be examined further.

Gramsci himself linked his analysis of "the popular" with his notion of ideological hegemony in what he called "the philosophy of praxis." A philosophy of praxis would "study the forms of cultural organization which keep the ideological world in movement, within a given country, and examine how they function in practice" (Gramsci, 1971, 341). A philosophy of praxis would promote the articulation of popular subjects, by diffusing alternative ways of conceptualizing the world, thereby establishing the foundation of a new language and sense of community among the subaltern strata (Boggs, 1976, 32). The man who reached the philosophy of praxis would be the "man in the mass" who has an awareness of his contradictory consciousness, which both unites him with his fellow workers and links him uncritically to his past. The subject himself becomes a philosopher who as an individual and as a member of a social group "not only grasps the contradictions, but posits himself as an element of the contradiction and elevates this element to a principle of knowledge and therefore of action" (Gramsci, 1971, 404). This consciousness is part of the counter-hegemonic struggle where the individual begins to recognize himself as a synthesis of existing relations and as representative of past relations and where the first stage is reached for the synthesis in which theory and practice will finally be one (Gramsci, 1971, 333).

With its deconstruction of the dyads: theory/practice, thought/action, subject/object now considered as dialectically linked, the philosophy of praxis suggests a

new way of conceptualizing "the popular"--as a narrative open to deconstruction, much like a linguistic narrative, where the ideological relations between its multiple signifying subjects are seen as so many "signifying moments" in the discourse of the popular experience. Although Gramsci himself does not "deconstruct" "the popular," he characterizes language as metaphorical with respect to the meanings and ideological content of words, and notes that hegemony is reproduced partly through the abstraction, in metaphorical form, of the language of previous civilizations (1971, 449-451).

This role of language in reproducing the hegemony of the dominant and its effect on the popular sectors can be expressed through a reconstruction of these relations, seen through a linguistic metaphor. What I am proposing is an explicit linkage of Gramscian theory with poststructural literary and psychoanalytic theory, to provide a theoretical/methodological framework for "the popular" that would take the notion of the deconstructed signifier of a literary text as a metaphor for the deconstruction of the discursive (textual) relations between the dominant and "the popular." What this means is considering "the popular" as consisting of many "signifiers" whose relations with the hegemonic strata (also signifiers) are mediated through ideological hegemony, and dialectically linked. Here ideology is not a simple representation of structural processes, but a discursive formation through which subjects (the popular sectors) signify (create knowledge and thereby the possibility of power) through their relationship to each other and to the hegemonic strata, and not to any assumed "objective" entity in the world. Ideological hegemony is here conceptualized in primarily linguistic terms, as suggested by Canclini in his description of the relationship between dominant and dominated: "The spaces of the hegemonic culture and of the popular are interpenetrated, such that the language of the workers or peasants is in part a construction of their own experience and in part a reformulation ('resemantizacion') of the language of....political power (1982, 48).

Canclini himself notes that there are several avenues of inquiry that could contribute significantly to a reconceptualization of "the popular" and that: "Not least among them are those that develop from the application of semiotics to the explanation of unconscious processes of symbolization and sublimation that are the basis of cultural production" (1982, 44). Canclini's analysis suggests the possibilities for the development of a poststructural reconceptualization of "the popular": one in which the reification of "the popular" to a static position as "the Other" by any "grand narrative" is resisted, in favor of a continual problematizing of "the popular" in its linguistic, as well as historico/political context. A poststructural conceptualization of "the popular" thus invokes "the popular" as a discursive text and continually interrogates not only the constituents of "the popular" and their relations with the hegemony, but the ideology affective in the processes of hegemony and counter-hegemony as well as in the theories that attempt to explain them (even poststructuralism). This project thus involves the disruption and

deconstruction of narratives--political, social, or ideological--in order to free up discursive space for the narrative of "the Other"; here, "the popular." In the section that follows, I flesh out this notion of discursive practice through the introduction of Lacan's notion of the primacy of the signifier, Derrida's notion of deconstruction, and Foucault's theory of the relations between language and power.

Part IV

According to Lacan, language is not external to the subject, but is constituent in the subject's field of experience and is materially inseparable from her/him: "language is not immaterial...it is a subtle body, but body it is. Words are trapped in all the corporeal images that captivate the subject" (1977, 87). Lacan deconstructs de Saussure's structuralist differentiation of signifier and signified, in order to demonstrate not only the arbitrary relation between words and things, but the disjuncture between particular elements of language itself. Here meaning in language (signification) is not contained in the linguistic signifiers of that meaning (words) but is located in the continually shifting relations between the signifiers themselves, and is thus metonymical in that meaning consistently eludes all attempts to concretely capture it. Moreover, language is not a product or extension of the subject, but constituent in her/his field of experience, materially separated from her/him. Signification is thus not "owned" by a subject, nor does the subject's discourse "contain" meaning, nor even **necessarily** refer to any permanently identifiable entity in the world, since all meaning is contextually contingent. According to Lacan, language does not in fact have to answer for its existence in the name of any signification whatsoever, as there is an incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier (1977, 154), "from which we can say that it is in the chain of the signifier that the meaning 'insists' but that none of its elements 'consists' in the signification of which it is at the moment capable" (1977, 153).

According to Lacan, then, meaning resides, in so far as it resides at all, as the "Other": "the structure of the signifying chain...in so far as it exists as a language, can function to signify **something quite other** than what it says" (emphasis in original) (1977, 155). I wish to here extrapolate this emphasis on the linguistic signifier to the cultural, political, and ideological arenas, where the signifiers referred to are human, rather than linguistic subjects. Now conceptual analysis focuses on the individual as part of the ethnic/religious/racial "Other" that is reconsidered as representing multiple individual agents whose relations with other subjects constitute the formative basis of new, unalienated knowledge and alternative discourse.

Considered in narrative terms, then, "the popular" is viewed as the author of its own text, or, as Derrida calls it, "histoire" (1987, 427). Derrida develops Lacan's emphasis on linguistic signifiers, and goes a step further on the path to deconstruction, stating that "the signified is originally and essentially...**always already in the**

position of the signifier" (emphasis in original) (1974, 73)--thus stipulating that there is no possible meaning outside the signifier itself. Robert Strozier, in *Saussure, Derrida and the Metaphysics of Subjectivity*, explains Derrida's strategy of deconstruction as "insist(ing) on the disjunction of the signified/signifier" (1988, 218). Thus, where Lacan's analysis suggests a conceptualization of "the popular" that focuses on the contradictory elements that constitute it, Derrida's deconstruction illustrates the fact that "the Other" is not itself free of ideology, but is part of a continually shifting ideological field. It is important to remember, however, in considering "the popular" as the creator of a self-authored discourse, that even that discourse is not free of ideology, and, if not continually deconstructed, may itself become a metanarrative, concealing the very processes of hegemony that it works to reveal. As Gramsci explains: "because by its nature it tends towards being a mass philosophy, the popular can only be conceived in a polemical form and in the form of a perpetual struggle" (1971, 421). Thus, Derrida and Lacan deconstruct the signifier/signified schema such that: a) there is no meaning outside the system of linguistic signs themselves, and b) meaning is not contained in the signs, but in the shifting relations **between** signs in any given context. In this analogy, both dominant and dominated are meaningful "signs," but are placed on an equal footing, such that the possibility for identity, autonomy, knowledge--and hence power--resides in both sectors, which are linked dialectically, creating a discourse that is at once hegemonic and counter-hegemonic, and continually remade.

With Lacan and Derrida, we can thus relocate the production of meaning to "the popular" itself, considering it as a self-critical text, rather than simply the alienated "Other" of a dominant ideology. However, this textual analysis will itself become a metanarrative if it does not integrate the notion of the political and cultural imperatives that underly the processes of ideological hegemony that mediate relations between individual subjects. According to Foucault, ideology is immanent in the morphology of discourse (cited in McLaren, 1989, 177) and speech inevitably linked with desire and power: "historians have constantly impressed upon us that speech is no mere verbalization of conflicts and systems of domination, but that it is the very object of man's conflicts" (Foucault, 1972, 216). Foucault considers discourse analysis and cultural studies as, fundamentally, studies of power: what constitutes it, who wields it, in whose interests it functions, and with what effects, that is, "the strategies, the networks, the mechanisms, all those techniques by which a decision is accepted and by which that decision could not but be taken in the way it was" (1988, 104). Linguistic/cultural discourse is a "discontinuous activity...a practice we impose upon things or events" (1972, 229), and analysis of it will thus not reveal immanent truths or meanings, but "a system of control in the production of discourse" (1972, 224).

Part V

With the introduction, then, of Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault into a reconceptualization of "the popular" a new direction can be suggested for the development of theoretical and methodological frameworks of popular education. "The popular" is considered as constituting many affective agents, each invested with the possibility of creating his/her own identity, **not merely in opposition** to the hegemonic discourse, but in dialectical relation with it. However, Foucault and Gramsci remind us that this dialectic is rooted in the ever-present systems of control over the production, exchange, and use of material and symbolic goods; the fact that the political agenda has shifted towards giving the marginalized a strategic advantage (in the creation of a counter discourse) does not mean that the rules of the ideological game have changed.

This analysis has attempted to combine elements of poststructuralist discourse theory with the Gramscian conception of ideological hegemony to reframe the complex interplay of the multiple subject positions of "the popular" as a narrative of signification that promotes a politics of emancipation and popular resistance. As Morrow notes, however, the question now arises as to what the implications would be of this reformulation in the context of popular education (1990, 23); in Latin America, the difficulty in establishing an operational notion of "the popular" derives from the complexity of cultural conflicts within popular sectors and between them and the dominant strata. Whereas in advanced capitalist societies a conceptualization of popular culture may be grounded in an identification of fairly stable class blocs, the Latin American context requires a conceptualization of "the popular" that can incorporate a multiplicity of actors and shifting alliances not only within and between classes, but across ethnic, gender, and other status groups.

Giroux, Simon, and McLaren discuss this poststructuralist interpretation of "the popular" in their exploration of a critical pedagogy of classroom practice, and I believe their analyses can be instructive if extrapolated to the context of popular education in Latin America. Giroux and Simon stress that a pedagogy "never begins on empty ground" (1989, 243) and that for that reason a good theoretical/methodological starting point would be one that affirms the lived reality and practice of everyday life, and takes the experience of "lived difference" as the organizing principle of an emancipatory pedagogy (1989, 243). This pedagogy, says Giroux, "implies a struggle--a struggle over assigned meaning, a struggle over the direction in which to desire, a struggle over particular modes of expression, and ultimately a struggle over multiple and even contradictory versions of self" (1989, 243). Further, as McLaren notes, locating the deconstructive exercise within an understanding of the dynamics of power suggests a recognition that "power/knowledge regimes of truth govern social relations not by producing coherent subjects with fixed identities but through discursive practices that produce subject

positions, which are always potentially contradictory" (1989, 177).

These analyses, which refer to marginalized groups in the classroom, are also relevant to a reconceptualization of "the popular" in Latin America, where "the popular" "is quite distinctive, in that it refers to diverse marginalized sectors, not the working class exclusively or mass culture generally" (Morrow, 1990, 1). As "the popular" in the North American classroom refers to ethnic, gender, or other minorities that are oppressed by the hegemonic practices of the school system, "the popular" in Latin America is also part of a pluralist culture, where the legacies of colonialism--including significant rural-urban differentiation and a large gap between upper and lower class cultures--have resulted in multiple oppressions of "the Other" (Morrow, 1990, 15).

This redefinition of "the popular" can, I believe, be put to use in the service of the type of liberating pedagogy and praxis advocated by Giroux, McLaren, and others. Giroux calls for a pedagogical struggle that engages the teacher as well as the student in a critical dialogue that examines the injustices and differences of everyday living as the "stuff" of an emancipatory education (1989, 242-245). On similar lines, a poststructuralist conception of "the popular" would take the everyday conditions of multiple subjects as the "signifying moments" in its cultural text and deconstruct those moments in the interests of an emancipatory politics. This project, as Giroux says, must consider pedagogy as more than simply what goes on in school but as "any practice which intentionally tries to influence the production of meaning" (1989, 248-249). Thus, many forms of cultural interaction involve pedagogical practices, **that exist not only within sites but across them**--hence "the practical efficacy of our own commitments rests with the possibility of constructing an alliance among different forms of cultural work" (Giroux, 1989, 249)--although it is important to underscore the fact that not every single action or protest necessarily signifies a form of cultural resistance.

This construction of alliances between different pedagogical practices of "the popular" is precisely what is needed for the development of a popular education in Latin America. If "the popular" is seen as a deconstructed text of intersecting signifiers, it can also be reconstructed, again and again, to represent the changing pedagogical practices and originating moments of meaning of its constituents--women's groups, trade unions, religious organizations, etc.--in the formation of a popular education that is both relevant and responsive, and reflective of the interests and needs of those constituents. A popular pedagogy can only in fact be liberating if the very language through which "the popular" defines itself and by which it is named is acceptable by all members of a popular grouping, and adequately represents that grouping.

This "poststructural" reworking of the concept of "the popular" might provide the basis for a theory of popular education that falls somewhere between deductivist and inductivist frameworks, one that is not "immanentist" in its conception of popular cultures, considering them as fixed objects, nor invests them

with properties assumed to be intrinsic to subordinate classes. For example, a better understanding of movements such as *Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* (the grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, Argentina, protesting the disappearance of their children under the military regime) could perhaps be facilitated with this new conception of popular culture. This movement could be analyzed as a coalition of multiple voices and possibly conflicting interests; although it is identifiable as a women's movement, it can be conceptually broken down into class and ethnic subsectors. In isolating the small-group identities that make up the larger movement, conflicts both within the movement and between the movement and the dominant sectors could be clarified and strategies for remedying (or capitalizing on!) these differences could be developed. Similarly, dominant groups--here the government, military, and state bureaucratic apparatuses--could be broken down into their constituent parts, to clarify the structural and political processes that sustain them in positions of dominance. Such an analysis could help identify critical shifts in power within the dominant bloc and reveal those areas of changing alliances that may be vulnerable to pressure from popular groups such as *Las Abuelas*.

Attempting thusly to avoid identifying "the popular" as a static oppositional discourse, but rather considering it as many interacting individuals and groups that create meaning in a shifting discursive field, is conceptually difficult and theoretically precarious. Giroux and Simon query, for example, whether such a destabilization of identity will not precipitate a paralysis of action if everything that is normally understood as natural and inevitable is problematized as being historically constructed and morally regulated (1989, 251). In a similar vein, Gramsci, in reference to his philosophy of praxis, queries: "If (one) affirms theoretically that every 'truth' believed to be eternal and absolute has had practical origins and has represented a 'provisional' value (historicity or every conception of the world and life) it is still very difficult to make people grasp 'practically' that such an interpretation is valid also for the philosophy of praxis itself, without in so doing shaking the convictions that are necessary for action" (1971, 406).

Such a destabilizing conceptualization does not, however, preclude the possibility of locating the originating moments of meaning and possibilities for the creation of an alternative discourse of the "Other"; it merely reminds the critic/analyst to continually interrogate her/his conceptual reference points, to avoid reifying "the popular" as the immanent "Other." This reconceptualization can, in fact, be linked with an emancipatory politics of "the Other," but it must be based on a notion of identity considered as process, where subject positions are continually problematized and in which, as Foucault reminds us, "the popular" is seen as engaged in a continual dialectic of power (hegemony and counter-hegemony) with the dominant sectors.

What I am proposing is what Philip Wexler calls a "critical semiotics" (1982, 288) of "the popular" that would take class, gender, ethnic, and other "marginal"

consciousnesses as the signifiers, "whether present or significantly absent" (1982, 288) of that text. In a "critical semiotics," the processes of hegemony are continually deconstructed and reevaluated, in an attempt to get as close as possible to an unalienated popular discourse. While the conceptual and analytic focus is on the individual subject, she or he is also identified as continually forming and reforming alliances with other members of "the popular"--collectively engaged in a game of ideological hegemony with the dominant sector(s).

Part VI

I have argued that the notion of "the popular" needs to be reconceptualized when it is used with reference to the Latin American context, because of the multicultural, multiethnic character of that culture. In this final section, in an attempt to help ground the foregoing discussion in a context with which readers may have more familiarity, I suggest the implications that this reconceptualization might have for teachers attempting to understand the nature of relations between their students in the multicultural classroom.

While this conceptual analysis cannot offer immediate solutions to conflicts due to inequality and oppression in the classroom, it can provide both teachers and students a new lens through which to view and reflect upon the nature of their relationship to each other. The notion of "the popular" can here be used to refer to the complex arrangement of groups that students create within schools, based on affiliation to gender, ethnic, religious, or other ties. Whereas critical theory typically examines inequality and alienation in schools in terms of the oppositional behaviors between such groups and the dominant school culture, introducing into it this concept of "the popular" allows us to view the relations between groups as dynamic processes. Students create formal and informal alliances in the classroom that continually change, as their allegiance to various groups changes. Perhaps the most important point to be made is that here the terms "minority" and "dominant" do not refer to stable groups, but to the temporary positions that individuals and groups assume in the classroom, and that their relations should be defined not in terms of opposition and confrontation, but as positions from which dialogue and negotiation can be constructed.

Because of the multiple aspects of self (race, gender, religion, etc.) which students express, their relations with others, based on one of those aspects, will change as the interests of the group change. That is, informal alliances in class created on the basis of race or gender do not necessarily constitute a fixed membership with consistent goals, but are configurations of a variety of interests that coalesce, given certain conditions. For example, alliances based on race in classrooms may include students of different class backgrounds, who may find their interests conflict with that group as their personal needs are addressed by another "popular" group based on, for example, religious affiliation. It is important

to understand that students may not define themselves as members of any such "popular" group, or, even if they do, they may not be aware of the dynamics of inter-group relations. If the teacher is able to understand these dynamics, however, and understand that there is an implicate order to, and rationality in, the conflict between students in her class, she can perhaps begin to make sense of the apparent chaos that often seems to rule the classroom.

This conception of popular groups as dynamic entities helps to explain the difficulties the critical educator faces in attempting to promote a politics of empowerment and awareness in the classroom. Not only is the teacher faced with the challenge of attending to the needs of a number of groups with competing interests, but the membership of each group is constantly changing, and thus the teacher has to continually shift strategies in order to keep pace with these changes. The teacher becomes frustrated, because she can never keep pace with the changing dynamics of group relations. Moreover, she is herself implicated in those dynamics, caught in the tension between addressing student needs and representing, to a certain extent, the official school culture.

This understanding also lifts the burden of "empowering" from the teacher's shoulders without discarding the idea of creating a classroom culture based on tolerance and support for individual and minority group difference. In a recent article,[1] Elizabeth Ellsworth reflects on the limits of critical pedagogy in the classroom and concludes from her own experience that true dialogue is impossible, since asymmetrical power relations exist which foreclose the possibility of "safe" places from which to speak. I agree that the classroom is never an entirely "safe" place in which everyone can speak and is certain of being heard, but it is precisely this impossibility, I would argue, that makes dialogue (for which "symmetry" and "equality" are not preconditions) so indispensable. The very dynamic of student group-formation that stymies teacher efforts to create a culture of democracy and empowerment also provides the opportunities for teachers and students to engage in the dialogue that will reveal the conditions under which democracy is possible. This "deconstructed" notion of popular culture helps us demystify the social arrangements that perpetuate inequality and oppression on the basis of race, class, and gender, and through this process offers teachers and students conceptual tools with which to challenge and disrupt those arrangements.

While this emphasis on the complexity of relations between student groups may be at first confusing to educators, it should help promote an understanding of student behavioral dynamics in the classroom. That is, as educators we cannot reasonably expect to be able to hear and respond to every voice in the classroom, to address the specific interests of all minority groups, nor even ensure a "safe" place in which everyone (including the teacher!) feels comfortable with expressing a voice. We can now realize that, as critical educators, we do not have to carry the burden of emancipation on our shoulders, waiting for the optimal conditions to transfer it to our students, but understand that we are engaged with them and

struggle with them within existing conditions. We can realize that we will "silence" others, despite all efforts to the contrary, and can never fully understand the experience or subjugation of another. By accepting these constraints I am not suggesting that existing conditions of "popular" and "dominant" groups cannot be altered; on the contrary, I am refusing to set up impossible goals for teachers that will inevitably disempower both them and their students. In refusing, for example, to reify "the popular" as inevitably oppressed and recognizing that oppression is not the domain of any particular group, but is linked with power and interest, the confrontational space between dominant and dominated groups is refigured as space where negotiation can take place.

In recognizing the inevitability of partial knowledge(s) and incomplete understanding, we can now understand that the possibility for critical, democratic education and real dialogue between teachers and students lies in the brief moments of understanding that link someone's partial knowledge to another's. The project of the critical educator is not replaced by a facile acceptance of the status-quo, but a pragmatic approach to building the foundations for a democratic, emancipatory education through dialogue and negotiation, where we do not wait for equality to magically appear before we talk to one another.

Perhaps this notion of "the popular" can be best understood as approximating Gramsci's ideal of the philosophy of praxis which Boggs defines as the promotion of the articulation of popular subjects by diffusing alternative ways of conceptualizing the world, and establishing the foundation of a new language and sense of community among subaltern groups (1976, 32). It may also suggest the possibility for developing what Canclini calls a "critical itinerary" (1988, 484) to create conceptual tools that articulate the social order to the conditions peculiar to each group, whether in the schools or in society at large. Popular culture is seen as continually remade, and is not reduced to a fixed object, "subordinate to the dominant in which all discursive action is reserved for that dominant" (Canclini, 1988, 470). Such a conceptualization would leave, as Canclini (1988, 470) suggests, a narrative of "the popular" that is sadly devoid of drama; indeed, a "story" where there is no need to look in the back of the text to find out the ending, as it's already been given away.

Notes

1. From Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Smith, editors. New York: International Publishers, 1971.
2. All citations from Canclini have been translated from the Spanish by the writer. Page numbers refer to the Spanish text.
3. Elizabeth Ellsworth, "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy," *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 59, No. 3, 1989.

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The Two-Year Route to First Grade: Administrative Decisions and Children's Lives

By Daniel J. Walsh, Mary E. Smith, and Natalie L. Baturka

Daniel J. Walsh is a professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Mary E. Smith and Natalie L. Baturka are doctoral candidates at the Curry School of Education, the University of Virginia, Charlottesville. *The research reported in this article was partially funded by the Commonwealth Center for the Education of Teachers, the University of Virginia.*

Contemporary educational practices can have very short half-lives, often fading before researchers have had the opportunity to describe and interpret them. The consequences of these practices, however, can be much more enduring—the children who are affected continue on in school long after the practices have been abandoned.[1]

In this article we examine a practice that began recently and suddenly in early schooling—requiring large numbers of children to take two years to get to first grade.[2] As Shepard has pointed out, "[S]tate level retention rates show that the most consistent and dramatic increases are in kindergarten...."[3] For example, in "Blue Ridge County," the rural-suburban school district[4] in central Virginia where this study took place, of the 528 children who entered kindergarten in 1973, one (.2 percent) took two years to get to first

grade; of the 729 who entered kindergarten in 1985, 137 (19 percent) did. In the two schools in this study, Jefferson and Madison, 58 of 129 children who entered kindergarten in 1986, or 45 percent, took the two-year route.[5] These 58 children were either retained in kindergarten or placed in a transitional-first grade (hereafter T-1), an extra-year grade between kindergarten and first grade. For the 1986/87 school year, Jefferson had two kindergartens and Madison five; the following year each school had a transitional-first grade classroom.

We asked two questions about the emergence of this practice. First, why was the practice initiated? Second, who were the children assigned to the extra-year route?

In order to understand why the practice was initiated, we interviewed teachers and principals at both schools, as well as central office staff, throughout the year. We also observed in classrooms and attended various staff meetings.

To discover which children were assigned to the extra-year route, we collected demographic data on the children and examined the extent to which assignment was related to social class, gender, ethnicity, and age. Our reasons for looking at class, gender, and ethnicity should be transparent. The sorting that all too often occurs in schools can be consistently explained in terms of these factors, ensuring unequal opportunity in schools, and reflecting larger inequalities in society.[6] We added age because, as we will show, age has become a dominant theme in the discourse on kindergarten readiness.

This study is part of an ongoing ethnographic investigation, begun in 1986, of early schooling in Blue Ridge County.

Why the Extra Year?

The year before the Early Childhood Initiative began, the Director of Elementary Education for Blue Ridge County, at the urging of a district principal, attended a workshop led by an individual connected to the Gesell Institute for Child Development. At the workshop, the Gesell interpretation of "developmental" education was presented, an interpretation that stresses the efficacy of extra-year programs where children who are not ready will get a "year to grow." The Gesell Institute claims that extra-yearing is an effective way to solve the very real problem of school failure, arguing that "perhaps 50 percent" of all school failure is due to "over placement," that is, children entering school before they are developmentally old enough.[7] The solution for over placement is to give children the *Gesell School Readiness Screening Test*[8] (hereafter the Gesell) to ascertain their "developmental age," and, derivatively, their readiness for kindergarten. Children who are not ready should be given an extra year, in the phrase popularized by the Gesell Institute, "the gift of time."[9]

The Director came away understanding for the first time, as he later told us in an interview, why children did poorly in school: They simply were not ready to

do what they were being required to do. He spoke of the frustrations he had once experienced as a middle-school math teacher. Now he understood why he had been frustrated—the children were not ready for what he had been trying to teach. The Gesell Test and extra-yearing became part of his agenda for the district.

Meanwhile, the state of Virginia was requiring districts to give certain incoming kindergarten children a screening test.[10] One of the five tests approved by the state was the Gesell. The Director formed a committee of teachers and administrators whose stated task was to select a test. The committee met twice, in June and July of 1984. A teacher who was on the committee described the process:

> We sat at this meeting [in June] and listened to explanations of the Brigance, the DIAL-R, and the Gesell....We didn't make the decision then in that meeting because we hadn't seen the other two, and we hadn't had time to examine them....All the teachers at the meeting said we needed time to look at them. "Let's talk about them. Let's see if we can set up a meeting with presentations of the other two."...Then in July, a week before the meeting, all of us received a notification that there would be a second meeting to make the decision and we were asked whether we could attend or not. And it was supposedly set up so that if there were not that many people who could attend they would rehave [reschedule] it. Well, it turns out that there were no teachers the second time. It was all principals and administrators, and it was only like six people that made the final decision.

The actual decision to choose the Gesell was made by a small group of administrators, including the Director, the Early Childhood Coordinator, and the principal noted earlier, all of whom strongly supported both the Gesell and the practice of extra-yearing.

Sessions to train teachers to administer the Gesell were held in the spring and summer of 1985. All children entering kindergarten in the fall of 1985 were given the Gesell.

Research and Rhetoric

The Gesell test has not fared well under scrutiny. Walker[11] and Kaufman[12] established its poor reliability and validity. Graue and Shepard found its predictive validity to be no better than would be obtained by flipping a coin.[13] Despite Gesell Institute claims that the test does not measure intelligence, Naglieri found it "quite similar to standardized measures of intellectual ability."[14] Meisels summed up the criticisms by arguing that it is "based on an outmoded theory of child development, lacks reliability and validity, and uses a concept of developmental age that has never been empirically verified."[15]

The developmental perspective espoused by the Gesell Institute is straight out

of the biological determinism of the 1930s. Thomas noted that "despite...passing notice of environmental factors, the dominant theme throughout all of the Gesell Institute work is that the prime factor in shaping development...is the child's genetically set maturation schedule."[16]

Nevertheless, the rhetoric of the Gesell Institute won the day. Blue Ridge County invested heavily in the Gesell Test, both in terms of commitment and money. A representative from the Gesell Institute led three-day workshops in the spring and summer of 1985 and again the following summer to train teachers how to administer the Gesell. Three teachers and a central office staff person were then sent to New Orleans for four days of special training to become workshop leaders. Video tapes from the Gesell Institute were shown to county teachers, local preschool teachers, and parents. The person who did the workshop described earlier was brought in to give a one-day workshop for teachers and principals, which one of us (Walsh) attended. He began the workshop with a sing-along, which he accompanied on guitar. He went on to stress the dangers of placing children in a grade before they were ready, and the importance of giving these children an extra year to grow. He emphasized the success that children who had been "given the gift of time" achieved. The rhetoric supporting extra-yearing struck me as very powerful. I began to understand how one might be convinced of its efficacy. Here was a very simple answer to the very troubling problem of school failure.

The rhetoric became pervasive in the schools. We frequently heard both academic and social success promised for children who would be given the gift of time. At staff meetings, we heard administrators tell teachers that giving children the extra year would end failure later on in school. "**Wait**," one administrator said often, "until middle school. Then we'll really start seeing the results." At one meeting an administrator announced, "There are no more slow children in Blue Ridge County! They are developmentally young." The implication was clear—we may not know what to do with slow children, but there is a ready solution for whatever problems "developmentally young" children have—an extra year to grow.

Teachers also spoke often of "how good the kids [who were extra-yeared] feel about themselves," and, concomitantly, how good they (the teachers) felt about the children they were extra-yearing. One spoke of how these children would "go on to be average or above average students," and without the extra year they would have always been on the bottom. She foresaw a "payoff...around third grade...[when] these kids will be shining instead of falling off." Another teacher described how she was able to convince parents that their child needed the extra year by assuring them that, as a result, their child would always be at the top of her class.

One of us (Walsh), observing at a staff meeting, wrote in fieldnotes:

> These are very heady times....I sit and listen to promises of success....I notice on a shelf, in full view, a copy of the *The Mental Measurements Yearbook*. In it is a very critical review

> of the Gesell Test by Kaufman [cited earlier]. Why didn't someone take the *Yearbook* off the shelf and look in it before the district bought into the Gesell and all the promises?

Apparently, dissenting voices had not been invited into the discussion.

Social Class, Ethnicity, Gender, and Age

Thus, extra yearing began. As we noted earlier, almost half of the children at Jefferson and Madison were extra-yeared. Given the severe limitations of the Gesell's validity, reliability, and predictive validity, as well as the lack of empirical validation of the concept of developmental age (all noted earlier), whether these children were "developmentally young" is not particularly interesting or useful. Rather, we wanted to know whether certain groups were being disproportionately affected.

We present below cross-tabulations of routes to first grade with social class, ethnicity, gender, and age. Although more sophisticated analyses are possible, cross-tabs was chosen because of its transparency and ready interpretability. In each table we show first cross-tabs of route as a dichotomous variable (2-year versus 1-year) by the variable in question for both schools combined. We then present two cross-tabs for each school, first with route as a dichotomous variable, then with route broken down into three levels: retained in kindergarten, placed in T-1, and promoted to first. We caution the reader that in some cases when route is broken down into three levels, some cells are very sparsely populated, rendering the chi-square statistic suspect. Nevertheless, we have included these tables to allow the reader to compare schools and extra-year routes, even if these comparisons must be made cautiously.

One difference that is immediately apparent (Table 1) is that Jefferson and Madison took different approaches to extra-yearing children. At Jefferson, 14 of the 16 children who were extra-yeared were placed in T-1; only two were retained in kindergarten. At Madison, of the 42 extra-year children, 25 were retained in kindergarten, and 17 were placed in T-1. To some extent this difference can be explained by numbers. Both schools had a single T-1 room; and when it was filled, there were fewer children left over at Jefferson, which had fewer than half the number of kindergarten children as did Madison.

Social Class

Social class is divided into two categories: those eligible for free or reduced lunch[17] (poor) and those not eligible (not poor). This categorization has the limitation of masking differences within group, for example, between working-class children and professional-class children. Other, more precise measures are seldom available from schools and were not available to us.

Table 1

Jefferson and Madison Combined
Route by Social Class

	Poor	Not Poor	Total
2-year	24	34	58
1-year	6	65	71
Total	30	99	129

chi-square: 19.4 (1df) p< .000

Jefferson School

Route by Social Class

	Poor	Not Poor	Total
2-year	10	6	16
1-year	4	21	25
Total	14	27	41

chi-square: 9.4 (1df) p< .002

Madison School

Route by Social Class

	Poor	Not Poor	Total
2-year	14	28	42
1-year	2	44	46
Total	16	72	88

chi-square: 12.4 (1df) p< .000

Detailed Route by Social Class

	Poor	Not Poor	Total
Retain	2	0	2
T-1	8	6	14
First	4	21	25
Total	14	27	41

chi-square: 10.8 (2df) p< .004*

Detailed Route by Social Class

	Poor	Not Poor	Total
Retain	12	13	25
T-1	2	15	17
First	2	44	46
Total	16	72	88

chi-square: 21.3 (2df) p< .000*

Key:

Poor: eligible for free or reduced lunch
Not poor: not eligible for free or reduced lunch
2-year: retained in kindergarten or placed in T-1
1-year: promoted to first grade
Retained: retained in kindergarten
T-1: placed in T-1
First: Promoted to first grade

* Because more than one-fifth of fitted cells are sparse (frequency < 5), significance tests are suspect.

The relationship between being poor and being extra-yeared is strong. Eighty percent of the poor children took the two-year route, compared to 34 percent of the not-poor children. This relationship holds in the individual schools. At Jefferson, 71 percent of the poor children took two years, compared to 22 percent of the non-poor children. At Madison, 87 percent of the poor children took the extra year, compared to 39 percent of the non-poor children. The difference between rates at the two school is of borderline statistical significance (chi-square=3.5; $p < .06$).

At Madison, poverty was a strong predictor of placement in the extra-year route; however, not being poor was not exactly a guarantee that one would not be extra-yeared. Poverty was not only strongly related to the extra-year route, but also to kindergarten retention—75 percent of the poor children who were extra-yeared were retained in kindergarten. Only two of the 17 children in T-1 were poor children. The non-poor extra-year children were divided about equally between kindergarten and T-1. At Jefferson the two children retained in kindergarten were poor.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity was not related to routing (Table 2). Both schools were predominantly white—Jefferson, 88 percent; Madison, 84 percent. The five minority children at Jefferson were Black; at Madison, there were ten Black, two Asian, and two Hispanic children. At both schools, the effect of social class overwhelms ethnicity. At Jefferson, three of the four minority poor children took the two-year route; the only minority non-poor child was placed in first. At Madison, all six minority poor children took the two-year route, and seven of the eight minority non-poor children were placed in first.

Gender

Gender was also unrelated to routing (Table 3). There is evidence from other research that boys are more likely to take the two-year route.[18] At first glance the T-1 room at Jefferson appears to fit the more-males model. As can be seen, however, this particular cohort at Jefferson was disproportionately male. At Madison, interestingly enough, more girls than boys, proportionately and absolutely (though not statistically significantly), were extra-yeared.

The argument for extra-yearing emphasizes the slower maturation rate of boys. At the workshop described earlier, the leader suggested that teachers consider the maturity levels of males in general, making joking reference to husbands. Teachers apparently rejected this part of the argument. A careful search of our fieldnotes revealed no instances of teachers making gender distinctions when talking about "developmentally young" or "developmentally delayed" children.

Table 2

Jefferson and Madison Combined
Route by Ethnicity

	Non-White	White	Total
2-year	10	48	58
1-year	9	62	71
Total	19	110	129

chi-square: .530 (1df) p< .467

Jefferson School

Route by Ethnicity

	Non-White*	White	Total
2-year	3	13	16
1-year	2	23	25
Total	5	36	41

chi-square: 1.1 (1df) p< .305***

Detailed Route by Ethnicity

	Non-White	White	Total
Retained	1	1	2
T-1	2	12	14
First	2	23	25
Total	5	36	41

chi-square: 3.1 (2df) p< .208*

Madison School

Route by Ethnicity

	Non-White**	White	Total
2-year	7	35	42
1-year	7	39	46
Total	14	74	88

chi-square: .03 (1df) p< .853

Detailed Route by Ethnicity

	Non-White	White	Total
Retained	5	20	25
T-1	2	15	17
First	7	39	46
Total	14	74	88

chi-square: .55 (2df) p< .761

Key:

2-year: retained in kindergarten or placed in T-1
1-year: promoted to first grade
Retained: retained in kindergarten
T-1: placed in T-1
First: Promoted to first grade
* All Black
** 2 Asian, 10 Black, 2 Hispanic
*** Because more than one-fifth of fitted cells are sparse (frequency < 5), significance tests are suspect.

Table 3

Jefferson and Madison Combined
Route by Gender

	Boys	Girls	Total
2-year	29	29	58
1-year	40	31	71
Total	69	60	129

chi-square: .52 (1df) p< .473

Jefferson School

Route by Gender

	Boys	Girls	Total
1-year	11	5	16
2-year	15	10	25
Total	26	15	41

chi-square: .32 (1df) p< .570

Detailed Route by Gender

	Boys	Girls	Total
Retained	1	1	2
T-1	10	4	14
First	15	10	25
Total	26	15	41

chi-square: .67 (2df) p< .716*

Madison School

Route by Gender

	Boys	Girls	Total
1-year	18	24	42
2-year	25	21	46
Total	43	45	88

chi-square: 1.2 (1df) p< .281

Detailed Route by Gender

	Boys	Girls	Total
Retained	10	15	25
T-1	8	9	17
First	25	21	46
Total	43	45	88

chi-square: 1.4 (2df) p< .506

Key:

2-year: retained in kindergarten or placed in T-1
1-year: promoted to first grade
Retained: retained in kindergarten
T-1: placed in T-1
First: Promoted to first grade

* Because more than one-fifth of fitted cells are sparse (frequency < 5), significance tests are suspect.

We inspected the data closely for possible explanations of a lack of a gender relationship, particularly at Madison where more girls than boys were extra-yeared. Did this cohort, for example, have disproportionately more poor girls? In fact, it did not. The percents of poor girls and poor boys were almost exactly the same. The biggest difference we could find was that at Madison all nine poor girls were retained in kindergarten. Although five of the seven poor boys were extra-yeared, they were both retained (3) and placed in T-1 (2). We do not know why no poor girls were placed in T-1.

Age

Blue Ridge County accepted children into kindergarten who turned five by January 1. We divided age into two categories— those who turned five in September, October, November, or December, 1986 (Fall birthdays) and those who turned five earlier (other). Typically children born closer to the cutoff-date for school entry, that is, the date by which they must turn five, were referred to by teachers as "young." Proponents of extra-year programs often refer to children born in the summer or fall as unready to enter school.[19] Shepard and Smith[20] have found that children with "late" birthdays are perceived as having difficulty in school. In interviews with us, teachers, particularly at Madison, described fall-birthday children as "not ready," "young," and "still babies." Children who were still four when they entered school were often referred to as "late-birthdays" or "four-year-olds," even though many of them turned five soon thereafter. One teacher spoke of how "some of the late birthdays are really young. They get upset easily. They can't sit very long." A second, "Some of them seem so young. They have a hard time getting along, sharing. There's crying. Academically they could still use another year. They're young across the board." And another, "They're just really young kids all the way around. They have high energy levels. They're very distractible."

As can be seen in Table 4, being a "late birthday" is related to routing. Sixty-seven percent of the Fall birthdays took the extra-year route, compared to 39 percent of the older children. For Madison, the effect of age is similar to the effect of social class. Being young makes the extra-year route likely—69 percent took it. Not being young does not guarantee otherwise—38 percent of the older children also took it. The effect of being both poor and young appears potent—all four poor-and-young children at Madison were retained in kindergarten. Age does not appear to be related to routing at Jefferson. Given the small cell sizes for Jefferson, we must, however, be cautious in our conclusions here.

There is an apparent anomaly concerning age that merits discussion. Why, when the discourse centers on developmental age, is age, that is, chronological age, a factor? The reason is as follows: A child who is almost six but is assigned a developmental age of five is, by Gesell norms, developmentally young, that is, her

Table 4

Jefferson and Madison Combined
Route by Age

	Fall Birthday	Other	Total
2-year	22	35	57
1-year	11	60	71
Total	33	95	128

chi-square: 8.8 (1df) p< .003

Jefferson School

Route by Age

	Fall Birthday	Other	Total
2-year	4	12	16
1-year	3	22	25
Total	7	34	41

chi-square: 1.2 (1df) p< .281*

Detailed Route by Age

	Fall Birthday	Other	Total
Retained	0	2	2
T-1	4	10	14
First	3	22	25
Total	7	34	41

chi-square: 2.2 (2df) p< .337*

Madison School

Route by Age

	Fall Birthday	Other	Total
2-year	18	23	41
1-year	8	38	46
Total	26	61	87

chi-square: 7.3 (1df) p< .007

Detailed Route by Age

	Fall Birthday	Other	Total
Retained	12	12	24
T-1	6	11	17
First	8	38	46
Total	26	61	87

chi-square: 8.3 (2df) p< .016

Key:

Fall birthday: Child turned 5 in September, October, November, or December, 1986
Other: Child turned 5 before September 1, 1986
2-year: retained in kindergarten or placed in T-1
1-year: promoted to first grade
Retained: retained in kindergarten
T-1: placed in T-1
First: Promoted to first grade
* Because more than one-fifth of fitted cells are sparse (frequency < 5), significance tests are suspect.

developmental age is below her chronological age; but because she is developmentally old enough for kindergarten, she is unlikely to be designated "young." Consider a child with a fall birthday, who is anywhere from 4.66 years old to almost five. If she tests developmentally young, she will be developmentally younger than five and thus too young for kindergarten. In fact if she could test at her age and still be judged developmentally young for kindergarten.[21] Thus, younger children are operating at a distinct disadvantage: They have no margin of error. If they do not achieve a developmental age at or above their chronological age, they are labeled young.

Discussion

Why Extra Yearing?

Why was extra-yearing brought to Blue Ridge County? It was certainly not because of research evidence. Reviews and meta-analyses of the research on retention have been unanimous in concluding that retention does not help children.[22] Holmes and Matthews were adamant, "Those who continue to retain pupils at grade level do so despite cumulative research evidence showing that the potential for negative effects consistently outweighs positive outcomes."[23] Gredler came to the same conclusion about transitional programs.[24] Smith and Shepard summed up the research on extra-yearing thus, "Two years in kindergarten, even when one year is labeled 'transition program,' fail to enhance achievement or solve the problem of inadequate school readiness."[25]

Clearly, the research evidence was ignored.

Then why was extra-yearing brought in? The hierarchical power relations of the district played a fundamental role. Only certain knowledge and certain voices were attended to; this knowledge and these voices were selected by a small group of people in power. A small group of administrators initiated and carried through their own agenda. They had found an answer to school failure. This answer glossed the realities of the situation and suppressed voices that might have suggested different answers. Voices critical of extra-yearing were not being attended to,[26] and other voices were.

Is it possible that had teachers been at the July 1984 meeting when the Gesell was chosen that some dissent would have been voiced? We asked two teachers with whom we have worked closely over the past five years and who had been at the June meeting. They responded that the Gesell had been a foregone conclusion. One noted that the committee had been "stacked" by the Director and Early Childhood Coordinator "with their corps." The other elaborated:

> We were used to things coming down from the top then....In those days the typical experimentation that was done was done

> with something **administrators** wanted. Things were never really piloted. They would give it to one school one year. The next year they gave it to everyone no matter what the teachers in the "pilot" school thought. Or at least I don't know of anything that one school piloted that wasn't then exported to all the schools.

One question this research raises is how it is that a few people can claim the power to initiate an obviously questionable practice that immediately and directly affects so many children. It appears that there were no checks to which these administrators were subjected or authorities to whom they were accountable. Extra-yearing was begun in a period when one superintendent was on his way out and another was coming in. The Gesell was selected as a screening test during one superintendent's lame-duck year and implemented during his successor's first year, at a time when the new superintendent and a new assistant superintendent for instruction were still trying to find their way around. In times of transition there are fewer checks from above. In a top-down system, there are no checks from below.

Cost Beyond Children's Lives

We should briefly discuss expense. We could not get access to financial records to find out how much money the district invested in bringing in the Gesell. We do know that the various trainings and workshops were expensive, in the words of one administrator, "Mucho mucho bucks." That expense aside, the district estimates that it spends $5,000 a year per child. In these two schools that comes to an additional $290,000 over the academic career of these 58 extra-yeared children. One might argue that these children would have been retained at some point anyway, so an inevitable expense was merely being front loaded. Perhaps, but the actual process did little to reassure us that some of these children would not be retained again anyway.

Who Was Extra-Yeared?

We expected all four variables—social class, gender, ethnicity, and age to be related to routing. Specifically, we expected more poor, male, minority, fall-birthday children to take two years to get to first grade. Walsh and Ellwein and their colleagues found this to be the case in their macro-study of nine Virginia districts, with social class and age being the strongest predictors.[27] At Jefferson and Madison many more poor than non-poor children were placed in the extra-year route. At least at Madison, more fall-born than older children were also extra-yeared.

The apparent difference between schools on age (as well as the borderline differences on rates by social class) deserves a brief comment. The teachers at Jefferson showed more resistance toward the Gesell and extra-yearing than did

those at Madison. We believe that the difference on age might be attributed to their resistance. We have begun to explore the role of teacher resistance elsewhere.[28] We note here only the most salient evidence—the rapidity at which Jefferson, compared to Madison, abandoned the practice of extra-yearing. At both schools, the T-1 rooms were abandoned after one year as a failed experiment. At Madison, however, extra-yearing continued unabated. Approximately the same percent of the entering 1987/88 cohort were extra-yeared, but all were retained in kindergarten. At Jefferson extra-yearing stopped almost completely.[29]

Conclusion

As we write, we have been working with the teachers in Blue Ridge County for five years. By any measures we know of, the kindergarten teachers at Jefferson and Madison would be rated as good, even superior, teachers. We do not believe that they were consciously selecting out poor children and labeling them **developmentally young**. It must be remembered that the decision to extra-year children had not been theirs. The directions and the rationale had come from the top: Give developmentally young children an extra year, the gift of time! Doing so will end school failure. The teachers decided which children to extra-year, but not whether or not they were going to extra-year. We suspect they picked out those children they knew would have the most difficulty in school. We are following up some of these children.[30] Our sense is that their intuitions were very accurate.

Extra-yearing did not end school failure in Blue Ridge County. The most telling evidence is that the district has abandoned the practice. Jefferson and Madison both abolished T-1 after a year. Jefferson stopped extra-yearing completely after a year; Madison, after three. The Gesell is no longer used. Across the district rates of retention in kindergarten are now very low.

The children, however, who were directly affected by decisions and actions with "the potential for negative effects [that] consistently outweighs positive outcomes," continue in school. A disproportionate number of them are those children who are most vulnerable to negative effects—the children of the poor. These children, who were given the "gift of time" with no regard for their own lived time are still there, at Madison, at Jefferson, and at the other district schools.

Byrnes found that "[r]etained children perceive retention as a punishment and a stigma, not as a positive event designed to help them."[31] The preliminary results of our follow-up work mirror Byrnes' findings. The children are not happy with what has happened to them and that they have not become the "shining stars" who were promised. They described themselves as having "flunked," not as having received a gift. One child talked of her fear of having flunked, "I wouldn't be smart enough if I had to go through some test when I grow up. You can get awards and stuff, and you'd have to go, 'Oh no, I'm dumb.'" She saw herself stamped as dumb because she had been retained. No matter what she may accomplish later on, she

will have to give the awards back. She will have to confess that she is dumb. After all, back when she was beginning school, she flunked.[32]

We suggest, finally, that there is an underlying issue more critical than extra-yearing or any single objectionable practice. That issue is the quest for single, simple answers to very complex school problems. As we noted earlier, extra-yearing children has become a widespread phenomenon. But it is merely another in a long tradition of such simplistic answers, answers which are often supported by most convincing rhetoric.

The crucial question is not how a few people could believe that the historically intractable problem of school failure could be solved simply by putting children in an extra-year route to first grade, but rather how they could actually institute the practice so easily, without public discussion and without regard for the evidence.

The glimmer of hope in the story we tell is that Blue Ridge County has learned from its experience. An, at best, ineffective and, at worst, invidious practice has ended. One can hope that the experience will not be forgotten. More importantly, one can hope that the children who were victimized by this particular search for simple answers will not be forgotten.

We have written this version of the story down as a reminder.

Notes

1. This research and preparation of this article were partially funded by the Commonwealth Center for the Education of Teachers, the University of Virginia. Opinions are those of the authors, and should not be attributed to the Center. The authors are most grateful to the staff of the Blue Ridge County Schools, particularly the teachers at Jefferson and Madison Schools, for their patience and knowledge, both of which they have shared amply. The comments and suggestions of Robin Leavitt, Mary Catherine Ellwein, Laird Heal, Karl Koenke, Gary Price, Robert Pianta, and two anonymous reviewers were invaluable.

2. Children taking the extra year are assigned to one of four labyrinthine routes: (a) they stay at home a year prior to entering kindergarten (although old enough to enter kindergarten) and then go through the normal kindergarten/first grade sequence; (b) they are placed in an extra-year program prior to kindergarten, and from there go through the normal kindergarten/first sequence; (c) they are placed in kindergarten, then retained in kindergarten, and then promoted to first grade; and (d) they are placed in kindergarten, then in an extra-year program between kindergarten and first grade (here referred to as transitional first), and finally in first grade. The extra-year programs prior to kindergarten are most often called junior, pre-, or developmental kindergartens. The extra-year programs between kindergarten and first are most often called transitional or developmental first grades. We do not discuss here children who go from kindergarten to first and then are retained in first. Retention in first may also be becoming a more common phenomenon, but the extra-year approach focuses on giving children the extra year before first grade. See Daniel J. Walsh, Mary Catherine Ellwein, Gerald M. Eads, and Alixandra K. Miller, "The Labyrinthine Routes of Early

Schooling: The Fourth Year of the Virginia Kindergarten Screening Study" (Paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, April 17, 1990).

3. Lorrie A. Shepard, "A Review of Research on Kindergarten Retention," in *Flunking Grades: Research and Policies on Retention*, Lorrie A. Shepard and Mary Lee Smith, editors (New York: Falmer, 1989), p. 65.
4. In Virginia, local education agencies are called **divisions**. We use the more common **district** to avoid confusion.
5. At Jefferson, 3 children who were placed in T-1 were promoted directly to second grade. We include these children because the original intention was that all the children in T-1 would go to first grade. Later dissatisfaction with the T-1 program caused the original decision to be changed. At Jefferson, 2 children who went directly from kindergarten to first were retained in first grade, thus changing the percentage slightly, to 37 percent, of children who spent 3 years in the kindergarten/first-grade sequence. At Madison, all T-1 children went to first, but 5 who went directly from kindergarten to first were retained in first, increasing the percentage to 53 percent.
6. See, for example, Jean Anyon, "Schools as Agencies of Social Legitimation," in *Contemporary Curriculum Discourses*, William Pinar, editor (Scottsdale, AZ: Gorsuch Scarisbrick, 1988), pp. 175-200; Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); Jeannie Oakes, *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
7. Frances L. Ilg, Louise Bates Ames, Jacqueline Haines, and Clyde Gillespie, *School Readiness* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), pp. xi-xiv.
8. Gesell Institute for Child Development, *School Readiness Screening Test* (Lumberville, PA: Programs for Education, 1978).
9. For extended discussion and critique see Gilbert R. Gredler, "Transition Classes: A Viable Alternative for the At-Risk Child?" *Psychology in the Schools*, 21, no. 4 (October 1984): 463-470; Daniel J. Walsh, "Changes in Kindergarten: Why Here? Why Now?" *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 4, No. 3 (September 1989), pp. 377-391.
10. Virginia was moving date by which children had to turn five to be eligible for kindergarten from December 31 to September 31. Parents of children whose birthdays fell between the new and old dates could petition for early entry. Districts were required to use a screening test with these children (for more detail see Walsh, "Changes in Kindergarten").
11. Deborah K. Walker, *Socioemotional Measures for Preschool and Kindergarten Children* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1973), pp. 267.
12. Nadeen L. Kaufman, "Review of the Gesell Preschool Test," in *The Ninth Mental Measurements Yearbook*, Vol. 1, James V. Mitchell, editor (Lincoln, NB; Buros Institute of Mental Measurements, 1985), pp. 607-608.
13. M. Elizabeth Graue and Lorrie A. Shepard, "Predictive Validity of the Gesell School Readiness Test," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (September, 1989): pp. 303-315.
14. Jack A. Naglieri, "Review of Gesell Preschool Test," in *The Ninth Mental Measurements Yearbook*, Mitchell, editor, p. 608.
15. Samuel J. Meisels, "Uses and Abuses of Developmental Screening and School

Readiness Testing," *Young Children*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (January 1987), p. 69.

16. R. Murray Thomas, *Comparing Theories of Child Development* (second edition) (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1985), p. 123.
17. For example, a child from a household of 4 with a yearly income of less than $15,145 is eligible for free lunch; a child from a household of 4 with an income of more than $15,145 and less than $21,553 is eligible for reduced lunch (1988/89 school year).
18. Mary Catherine Ellwein and Gene V. Glass, "Ending Social Promotion in Waterford: Appearances and Reality," in *Flunking Grades*, Shepard and Smith, editors, pp. 151-173; Walsh, Ellwein, Eads, and Miller, *op. cit.*; Walsh, Ellwein, Eads, and Miller, "Knocking on Kindergarten's Door: Who Gets In? Who's Kept Out?" *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (March 1991), pp. 89-100.
19. See, for example, James K. Uphoff and June Gilmore, "Pupil Age at School Entrance—How Many are Ready for Success?" *Educational Leadership*, September 1985, pp. 86-90.
20. Lorrie A. Shepard and Mary Lee Smith, "Synthesis of Research on School Readiness and Kindergarten Retention," *Educational Leadership*, November 1986, pp. 78-86.
21. On the Gesell developmental ages are assigned in 6 month increments. Thus a child who is 4.66 and tests at four and a half would be right on target, but because children who are developmentally younger than five are viewed as not ready for kindergarten, she would still be seen as developmentally young.
22. In addition to the authors mentioned in this paragraph see also C. Thomas Holmes, "Grade Level Retention Effects: A Meta-Analysis of Research Studies," in *Flunking Grades*, Shepard and Smith, editors, pp. 16-33; Gregg B. Jackson, "The Research Evidence on the Effects of Grade Retention," *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Fall 1975), pp. 613-635.
23. C. Thomas Holmes and Kenneth M. Matthews, "The Effects of Nonpromotion on Elementary and Junior High School Pupils: A Meta-analysis," *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (Summer 1984), p. 232.
24. Gredler, "Transition Classes," p. 469.
25. Smith & Shepard, "Flunking Grades: A Recapitulation," p. 215.
26. In fairness, it must be pointed out that in 1986 the Smith and Shepard statement quoted above had not been made.
27. Walsh et al., "The Labyrinthine Routes of Early Schooling"; Walsh *et al.*, "Knocking on Kindergarten's Door."
28. Daniel J. Walsh, Natalie L. Baturka, Nan Colter, and Mary E. Smith, "Changing One's Mind—Maintaining One's Identity: A First Grade Teacher's Story," *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 93, No. 1 (Fall 1991): 73-86; Daniel J. Walsh, Jamie Endahl, Natalie L. Baturka, and Mary E. Smith, "From Bitching to Resisting: A Case Study," unpublished manuscript.
29. After the teachers at Jefferson had decided to end extra-yearing, the principal intervened and unilaterally announced that there would be no more retention in kindergarten at Jefferson. The two children whom the teachers had decided to retain in kindergarten were then placed into a special education room.
30. Natalie L. Baturka, Daniel J. Walsh, and Mary E. Smith, "'It Says in the Guiness Book of World Records That a Girl Stayed in Kindergarten Until She Was 13'" (Paper delivered at the Eighty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological

Association, Washington, D.C., November 17, 1989).

31. Deborah A. Byrnes, "Attitudes of Students, Parents, and Educators toward Repeating a Grade," in *Flunking Grades*, Shepard and Smith, editors, p. 130.

32. Baturka, Walsh, and Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

The Boys in the Band: Sexism and the Construction of Gender in Middle School Textbook Illustrations

By Julia Eklund Koza

Julia Eklund Koza is an assistant professor with the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison. *Early versions of this article were presented at the April 1991 meeting of the American Educational Research Associaiton in Chicago, Illinois, and at the June 1991 Feminist Theory and Music Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Funding for this research was provided by a grant from the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation.*

Introduction[1]

When communications professor Lana F. Rakow asserts that educators and students "cannot set aside the social relationships of the larger world--a world in which classifications of gender, race and class are among the most paramount," she underscores a long-neglected reality: gender matters in education.[2] Gender relations, often ignored in past discussions of education and power, are slowly being recognized as factors that pervade all aspects of schooling. Educator Michael Apple, in his contention that schools are major agencies for the transmission of dominant culture, implies it is dominant discourses concerning gender relations that often prevail in education.[3] Dominant discourses

frequently have been sexist in the past and have sustained unequal power relations.

Over the past 20 years, educators troubled by the perpetuation of dominant gender relations through the use of biased curricular materials have pointed out distortions in textbooks from a variety of disciplines, and they have demonstrated how silences have rendered women and their contributions invisible. However, curricular materials from the arts usually have been overlooked in these studies. For example, published research has yet to address the frequency and manner in which females are represented in music textbooks. Recognized or not, however, specific gender relations are maintained in the field of music as well as in the curricular materials published for music educators.

To begin the exploration of these issues, I recently completed an analysis of illustrations of people engaged in music-related activities as found in all recently published middle school music textbooks. Series issued in the United States in 1988 by the three publishers of music texts were examined. In addition to gathering coded data about all 3,487 figures whose sex could be identified, I recorded additional information about subtle features of the pictures, features not addressed by the questions eliciting coded answers.

Empirical analysis of the coded data revealed that these texts not only underrepresent females engaged in music-related activities, but also perpetuate traditional sex stereotypes associated with specific musical instruments and activities. Overall, 68.9 percent of the music-related figures in the texts were male. Underrepresentation of females was evident across publishers, grade levels, and type of illustration, as well as across age level of the figure, professional status, time frame, and geographical location.

Females were underrepresented in all musical activity categories; however, higher percentages of males were recorded for the stereotypically masculine areas of composing, conducting, and playing a musical instrument than they were for singing, traditionally considered a feminine endeavor. Of the few music teachers pictured, the majority were male. There were no illustrations of female band directors. Finally, female musicians were far less likely than their male counterparts to be identified by name.

Sex stereotyping was also apparent in illustrations of instrumentalists. Among 44 different instruments associated five or more times with pictured musicians, only three—the piccolo, dulcimer, and maracas—were played by a female majority; two instruments, the flute and mandolin, were associated with equal numbers of males and females. For the remaining 39 instruments, the majority of the players were male. Females never played bass drums, timpani, tubas, or organs; among those instruments associated with both sexes, the highest percentages of male players were noted for the saxophone (97.5 percent), trombone (93.8 percent), trumpet (93.8 percent), bassoon (92.0 percent), clarinet (91.7 percent), and double bass (91.2 percent). The study also uncovered new stereotypes associated with electronic instruments and the performance of popular music. For

example, 89.7 percent of the electric guitarists were male, as were 89.7 percent of the drum set players.

The empirical evidence regarding sex stereotyping was compelling, but it only told half the story. Early in the process of data collection, it became clear from the accumulated non-coded information that not all illustrations sorted into the same coded category were created equal, often to the detriment of the females represented. For example, classifying a figure as male or female and counting that figure as a conductor or singer, did not take into account the presence or absence of signs of status, prestige, and positional power.

To illustrate this point, I will extract one strand from the larger study and discuss representations of choral and instrumental conductors found in the music textbooks. My reading of these illustrations suggests that although the pictures occasionally challenge traditional discourses about conductors, they frequently reinforce dominant discourses about gender, and as a result, help perpetuate unequal power relations. These illustrations present conflicting and conflicted images of female conductors, images quite different from those of males. Since the vast majority of the textbook illustrations were photographs (81 percent of all illustrations and 100 percent of the illustrations of female conductors), my theoretical framework addresses the question of how photographs help construct meaning.

Theories About the Impact and Meaning of A Photographic Image

Because the photographic image has been surrounded by a myth of objectivity, it may have an impact exceeding that of other visual media. Identified by Roland Barthes in his discussion of the press photograph, the myth of objectivity is the perception that a photograph is a "perfect **analogon**" of reality, a "**message without a code**."[4] Mariamne Whatley, in her analysis of college textbooks, asserts that photographs may have a stronger effect on students than other types of illustrative matter because they are generally viewed as objective portrayals of reality.[5] Michael J. Shapiro discusses the unique political power of the photographic image, given the widespread acceptance of this myth: "Of all modes of representation, [the photograph] is the one most easily assimilated into the discourses of knowledge and truth, for it is thought to be an unmediated simulacrum, a copy of what we consider the 'real.'"[6] Shapiro adds that it is difficult when viewing a photograph to resist the "seductiveness of the real" and to detect underlying ideology at work; thus, he considers the photograph to be the "quintessential form of ideological statement inasmuch as it is a form of practice that tends to be thought of as a faithful representation."[7] Textbooks in general are often perceived to be ideologically neutral, and thus, a textbook photograph--cloaked in the myth of photographic objectivity--possesses double immunity from

critical analysis.

As Barthes observed, a photograph is neither objective nor purely denotative; rather, photographic images are constructed. Connotation, which he describes as the "imposition of a second meaning upon the photographic message proper," can occur at many points in the process of production.[8] Techniques such as trick effects, pose, objects, photogeny, aestheticism, and syntax may suggest specific connotations.[9] "Objects" refers to the objects photographed, photogeny to techniques such as lighting, and syntax to the relationship of one photograph to others. The written text accompanying a photograph, such as a caption, can also be connotative.[10]

According to Barthes, a code of connotation helps construct meaning, and this code is a product of culture and history; the code's signs are "gestures, attitudes, expressions, colors, or effects endowed with certain meanings by virtue of the practices of a certain society."[11] Whatley maintains that the meaning of a textbook photograph is a "product of viewer reception," suggesting that it is not inherent to the image itself.[12] As Whatley and poststructuralist Chris Weedon note, although meanings are dynamic and ever-changing, at any given moment in history and within a specific context, they are temporarily fixed.[13] Thus, while acknowledging multiple meanings and alternative readings, it is possible to speak of dominant meanings and dominant ways of seeing. Whatley discusses the concept of temporarily fixed meaning as applied to textbook photographs: "Textbook readers in similar social contexts share in similar cultural discourses and it is therefore possible to speak of predictable ways in which a text or photograph may be read."[14]

Describing photographs as discursive practices situated within a larger pool of discourses, Shapiro suggests the relationship between a photographic image and the broader discursive milieu:

> Photography thus speaks and thinks in a variety of ways, and there is no essential answer to how it tends to signify. Its statements, like those in other modes of discourse, must be situated; its signifying force cannot be located wholly formalistically **within** the statement but rather emerges from the general economy of statements, photographic and otherwise, within which it functions.[15]

Along with the realization that photographs are not objective portrayals of reality has come recognition that photographs, like other discursive practices, are politicized and ideological. Shapiro writes:

> To discern the political rhetoric of photography it is necessary ...to look at photographic statements on the basis of their tendency to either reproduce dominant forms of discourse, which help circulate the existing system of power, authority, and exchange or to look at them on the basis of their tendency to provoke critical analysis, to denaturalize what is unproblematically accepted and to offer thereby an avenue for politicizing

problematics.[16]

Dominant discourses serve specific interests and groups, however; reproducing the discourses validates those groups, reinforcing existing power relations. In Shapiro's estimation, few photographs challenge dominant discourses. He states that "there is much about the photographic genre that lends itself not to the activation of socially implicated and even impertinent questions but to a pacification, a reinforcement of the kinds of interpretive codes that lend an aura of naturalness and permanence to the existing structures."[17]

Weedon contributes to the discussion by describing the politics of representation as they pertain to gender: "No representations in the written and visual media are gender-neutral. They either confirm or challenge the status quo through the ways they construct or fail to construct images of femininity and masculinity."[18] According to Weedon, women usually are depicted in ways that serve male interests and encourage women to identify with "traditional female gender norms of sensibility, passivity and irrationality."[19]

The assertion that neutrality is impossible does not deny the existence of various connotative procedures and signs within a single photograph, each of which can conflict with other signs and procedures. The process of constructing meaning is complex, photographs can be understood on many levels, and a picture can be a site of conflict or mixed messages. Rather, it disputes the idea that photographs can portray people without taking any position on gender.

Paradigms of Power

Power is a principal concept in this analysis; therefore, I will briefly examine some possible understandings of this term. Central to any such discussion, however, is the recognition that unequal power relations exist in society. According to Apple, many factors contribute to these inequities; among them are several related to schooling, including the unequal distribution of cultural capital and the selective tradition that determines what constitutes legitimate knowledge.[20] He contends that schools can both maintain and challenge inequities.[21] Educators concerned about social justice often place the more equal distribution of power high on the list of educational goals.

Educator David Nyberg defines power as an inevitable and ubiquitous element of all social relations.[22] According to him, power is a "relational concept that is part of any context that includes at least two people and one intended action."[23] The social aspect of power, in Nyberg's estimation, is characterized by "hierarchy, delegation, and cooperation."[24]

Many feminist scholars, while agreeing with Nyberg's basic definition, would point out that hierarchy, although frequently a social aspect of power, is not an essential ingredient in power relations. Feminists Helen Astin, Carole Leland, and Betty Friedan articulate taxonomies of power and explain how various power

regimes operate. Astin and Leland contrast hierarchical leadership paradigms with alternative empowerment paradigms and discuss the understandings of power on which each model is based:

> In hierarchical paradigms of leadership that rest on the leader-follower model, the positional leader is someone who has authority and who controls information and resources in order to accomplish particular objectives. In other words, this person exercises power over others as she or he "leads."[25]

By contrast, in a non-hierarchical empowerment paradigm, power is viewed as energy, not control, and there is a different understanding of leadership: "A leader does not have to exercise power over others, that is, **control**. Instead, she can mobilize power and engage in leadership activities that empower others--in other words, she can exercise power **with others**, or **shared power**."[26] The empowerment paradigm is characterized by cooperation and inclusivity rather than competition and domination; it highlights collaboration rather than individual achievement.

Friedan, in a description of studies undertaken at the Stanford Research Institute and at Harvard University, compares the traditional hierarchical style, termed "Alpha," to an inclusive collaborative style, called "Beta."[27] According to Stanford researcher Paul Schwartz, who is quoted by Friedan, women tend to use the Beta style and men the Alpha--a pattern resulting from socialization. Thus, leadership styles have come to be viewed as gender-linked, even though there is no innate reason why a particular approach to power should be associated with one sex or the other. Schwartz claims that both leadership styles are equally valuable; however, in his estimation, the Alpha style has been the "'sole model of leadership available'" in the United States.[28] Therefore, even though power with others in non-hierarchical relations is considered by some to be a valid model, power over consenting others in a hierarchy remains the generally accepted paradigm.

Codes of connotation include signs of prestige, status, and power.[29] Given Schwartz's assessment of the predominance of the Alpha leadership style, it is fair to assume that at the present time, signs of power are derived from the traditional Alpha paradigm.

Conductors and Conducting

Given this framework, I wanted to explore whether music textbook illustrations confirmed or challenged dominant discourses about conducting or about gender; but before turning to the photographs themselves, it was necessary to explore widely circulated meanings of conductor and conducting. Although conducting encompasses a broad spectrum of activities ranging from directing the Chicago Symphony to leading a children's choir at a preschool, the term "conductor" usually is associated with elite, high-status, powerful positions. The

person at the preschool does indeed conduct, but he or she would more likely be called a teacher, a term suggesting lower status than "conductor." The tendency of high school music teachers to prefer the labels "director" or "conductor" over "teacher" is a commentary on the differences in prestige suggested by the various terms.

Conducting traditionally has been considered men's work, and all major symphonic orchestras in the United States today are conducted by males. Instrumental conductors generally enjoy higher visibility and status than their choral counterparts, and working with professional musicians usually accords more prestige than conducting amateurs. Therefore, conductors associated with professional instrumental organizations stand at the apex of a hierarchical status pyramid. Conductors, as the most powerful individuals within a performance organization, form an exclusive group, and conducting traditionally has been an elite activity, even among males.

Thus, being female is inconsistent with conventional images of a conductor, and for the most part, the textbook illustrations I examined reinforced the idea that conductors are male. In all, 78 of the 3,487 illustrated figures were conductors; 79.5 percent of the conductors, 62 of them, were male, while 16 were female.

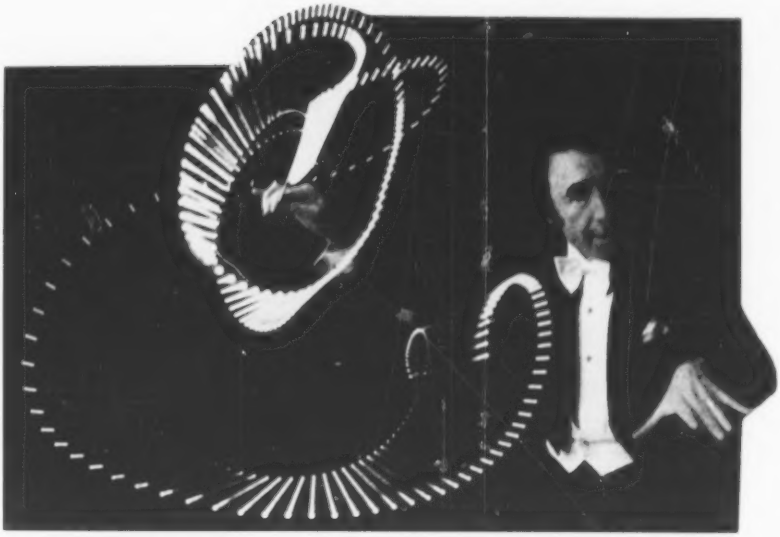
Schematics and line drawings, representing no person in particular, provided images of a generic conductor.[30] In all cases, the figure was male. A few schematics represented conductors in an androgynous manner, for example, by including only a pair of hands holding a baton, but because these latter illustrations did not clearly indicate the sex of the figure, they were excluded from the study. Although androgynous schematics do not actively promote the stereotype of conductor as male, neither do they challenge the stereotype as directly as would a schematic of a female.

On the one hand, the statistics, while unimpressive, could have been worse. A few women conductors were represented, and a higher percentage of females was noted among illustrations of conductors than among those of individuals engaged in other musical activities, notably scholarship and composing. On the other hand, nearly four-fifths of the conductors were male. Furthermore, textbook equity involves not only the frequency but also the manner in which women are pictured. An examination of the photographs revealed that female conductors were represented in a manner quite different from their male counterparts.

Illustrations of Male Conductors

Pictures of prestigious and powerful male conductors were legion, and I have chosen a few representative examples to discuss how these images were created. The first illustration portrays a conductor in action; the position of his arms, the gestures of his hands, and the presence of a baton all suggest activity (Figure 1). His conducting gestures are authoritative and decisive. The special-effects photog-

Figure 1



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raphy used on the baton fosters a sense of motion. The conductor gazes directly at the viewer, meeting the world head on. His facial expression is intense, unsmiling, without warmth. This conductor is serious and on the move.

Attire sometimes suggests the status of the wearer, and it may allude to positional power. For example, a tuxedo connotes privileged-class status; in this instance, the conductor's attire suggests an actual performance as opposed to a rehearsal. The high quality of the tuxedo indicates the conductor is a professional rather than an amateur musician. The photograph clearly presents the man's public image; the only object alluding to private dimensions of his life is his wedding band, which appears to have been included coincidentally.

If the inclusion of the ring was intentional, the question of why this particular object was chosen must be raised. A wedding band worn on the left hand is both a sign of marital status and an indicator of probable sexual orientation. In the United States, proponents of disciplines such as music, which require individuals to exhibit expressive characteristics traditionally considered feminine, sometimes provide assurances that participating males are "real men," i.e., heterosexual. A wedding ring might provide such an assurance. Whether or not its inclusion was

intentional, however, the ring is the only sign alluding to the conductor's personal life.

A sign of authority in this photograph is the conductor's greying hair. Although indications of advanced age can diminish the status and authority of the figure depicted, a touch of grey hair is not only acceptable but empowering when the figure is male.

The darkened background of the photograph removes the conductor from a setting. While this construction eliminates the opportunity to present other objects connoting power, it also removes any clutter that might draw the eye away from the conductor himself. Together with the chiaroscuro, it concentrates attention onto the figure, who is so powerful he can break through the edges of the photograph with his arms and baton. He appears to be moving out of a picture that cannot contain his energy.

The next photograph, by means of pose, attire, facial expression, and background, creates the image of a prestigious professional musician (Figure 2). In this instance, the pose and camera angle emphasize the hierarchial power relations generally accepted as standard in traditional definitions of conducting; in other words, an Alpha leadership style is suggested. The camera angle places the conductor's head and torso above the instrumentalists, as well as at the center of the viewer's attention. Background figures draw some attention away from the conductor himself, but they do not compete with him for status. Instead, their identity as adult, male instrumentalists (who probably are professional musicians, judging by their attire), confirms his prestige, status, and positional power.

The conductor Robert Shaw not only is named, but is also honored with a biographical sketch (Figure 3). The inclusion of such information about a figure is a sign of high status, suggesting the person has a name and a life story worth remembering. As Barthes noted, the text surrounding a photograph can be connotative. In this instance, the written text and caption provide further evidence that the photographed figure is prestigious and in a position of power.

Although Shaw is probably best known as a choral conductor, the biographical sketch indicates that he conducts both choirs and orchestras. Significantly, the choirs are nowhere to be seen, but a picture on the facing page features an orchestra preparing to perform a work Shaw commissioned.

Like the previous pictures, the photograph of Shaw relies on facial expression to connote serious intensity and on objects such as attire and a blurred baton to suggest action, prestige, and power. Dramatic lighting effects, together with a darkened background, draw attention to Shaw.

The final picture of a male conductor dramatically exemplifies how camera angle can emphasize the power position of a figure (Figure 4). In this instance, the viewer is situated as an instrumental performer would be—beneath the conductor, looking up at him. This deferent position suggests unequal power relations between conductor and performer; from this angle, the viewer is overwhelmed by

Figure 2

Copyright David Rentas. Reprinted by permission of David Rentas.

Figure 3

Courtesy of the Atlanta Symphony.

the imposing proportions of the figure. The conductor's outstretched hands suggest control; an Alpha leadership style is implied.

Although this conductor is unnamed and is dressed in casual attire indicating a rehearsal in progress, his prestigiousness is nonetheless indicated by other objects in the picture. The lighting and the architectural details of the performance hall, seen in the background, suggest spaciousness and opulence. The size of the musical score and the prominence of the music stand indicate that weighty, momentous music is in store.

Not all pictures of males contained the same connotations of strength, activity, prestige, and authority, but they did feature a sufficient number to make the high status of many male conductors amply clear. Not only did they articulate traditional power relations within performance organizations, but they also confirmed that male conductors tend to be associated with power as it is defined in the Alpha leadership paradigm. The previous examples contain some of the more dramatic cases found among the 62 illustrations of male conductors; overall, however, the pictures I chose to discuss are typical rather than exceptional.

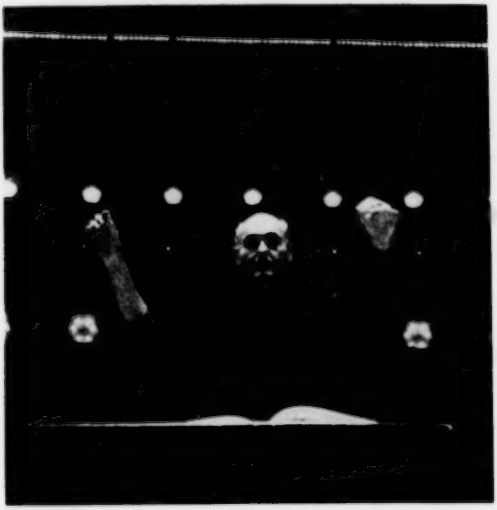
Illustrations of Female Conductors

As indicated earlier, nearly four-fifths of the conductors pictured in music textbooks were male. Because there were so few illustrations of female conductors, the manner of their representation was of particular interest. According to Whatley, who analyzed representations of African Americans in college sex education textbooks, the danger of misconstruing characteristics of the individual as those of the group is increased when only a few members of the group are depicted.[31] Applied to the music textbook study, this observation suggests that meanings derived from pictures of female conductors may be generalized without substantiation to females as a group, and particularly to all female conductors. Hence, the presence or absence of signs of prestige, status, and power would be meaningful. If traditional definitions of what accords prestige and status are accepted as a given, and if Alpha power is considered the norm--essential for the smooth operation of a performance organization--then textbook equity must be judged, in part, on whether illustrations of women conductors include indicators of status and power comparable to those found in pictures of males.

The 16 photographs of female conductors contained few indicators of high status and power, even when the women portrayed held prestigious positions. Ironically, when signs of power were present, they almost invariably accompanied other signs suggesting passivity, subordination, or powerlessness. Thus, the images of females contained more contradictions than those of males.

Rather than being interspersed throughout the texts and depicting a variety of women, pictures of female conductors usually appeared in clusters featuring the same individual photographed several times. For example, eight of the 16 pictures

Figure 4



Robert Lightfoot III/Nawrocki Stock Photo.

were concentrated in a two-page article on Eve Queler, conductor of the Opera Orchestra of New York.[32]

Setting is a significant feature of the Queler photographs. In two pictures, she is seated at a dining room table, presumably in her home, surrounded by symbols of domesticity. An attractively arranged basket of fruit, a bouquet of flowers, coffee cups, and dirty dishes indicating that Queler recently fed an unidentified male guest, all paint a domestic scene. In the second of the pictures, a cheerful yellow kitchen is seen in the background, complete with pots and pans. Cooking, gardening, arranging flowers, and nurturing are activities traditionally associated with women; all of them reinforce a stereotyped image of woman as housewife/mother. Although the topic at hand presumably is her career as a professional conductor, Queler, director of the Opera Orchestra of New York, is photographed a few steps away from her kitchen. Apparently she manages the orchestra from her dining room table. A few male musicians (no conductors) were interviewed at home in this textbook series, but they were nowhere near kitchens or food. By contrast, even a photograph of Queler actually coaching a vocalist includes a dining room in the background.

The emphasis on domesticity in these pictures is reminiscent of nineteenth-century American magazine discussions of professional women musicians. At that

time, women seeking careers outside the home were considered freakish, and popular magazines desiring to present these women's lives in a positive light often focused on domestic particulars; they attempted to confirm that women professional musicians were "real women" too—that is, they were paragons of domesticity. Although such confirmation was probably not the goal of current publishers, the parallel between past and present representations is too striking to be ignored.

In five pictures, Queler is seated at the piano, apparently coaching a female singer. The setting for the lesson is informal and homey. Unlike many of her male counterparts, Queler is dressed in street clothing. The image of tutor, given Queler's occupation, is confusing, suggesting as it does that she teaches private music lessons in her home. As conductor of an opera orchestra, Queler directs instrumentalists in addition to vocalists, and some of the performers are male. Presumably she conducts in a concert hall. However, these pictures do not convey this critical information.

The photographs of Queler as vocal coach are replete with objects connoting interests and roles traditionally considered feminine, and they reinforce prevailing music-related gender stereotypes. For example, the piano is one of few instruments associated historically with females; a woman seated at a keyboard instrument is a stock image dating back at least as far as the Renaissance. Unlike conducting, providing private voice or piano instruction in one's home has long been an occupation for women in music.

One picture shows Queler actually conducting; because she is standing, which is a more active and commanding position than sitting, and because she is actually involved in her work, she is portrayed in a manner quite similar to that used for males. However, Queler conducts only one female vocalist, without an audience, at home. Her pose resembles that of a male conductor discussed earlier (Figure 4), but the camera angle presents a different commentary on power relations. In all eight pictures of Queler, the viewer looks down on her or beholds her eye to eye.

Unlike the stern, intense facial expressions featured on the males, Queler's suggest that she is warm and friendly. Her hand gestures and facial expression indicate the music she conducts is soft and gentle. Associating Queler with such characteristics as warmth and gentleness, while her male colleagues are portrayed as serious, stern, and intense, is problematic because it reinforces traditional stereotypes concerning how men and women act. Furthermore, if being warm, gentle, and nurturing is not considered a sign of professional competence, then pictures of women exhibiting only these characteristics will not enhance the perception that women conductors are capable. Instead, such poses may suggest women are not serious about their work. Finally, they may reinforce traditional beliefs concerning the existence of masculine and feminine musical styles and may imply that women only conduct "sweet" or "pretty" music.

On the positive side, Queler is named and interviewed. The inclusion of a female who is said to conduct an orchestra challenges traditional images. Her

presence in the book suggests that this publisher is aware of equity issues. However, many connotative procedures fail to confirm Queler's prestigious position, and without the trappings of power, it is more difficult to view her as a serious professional musician than it was the male conductors discussed earlier. The bright lights, the opulent concert halls, the attire of a professional conductor, and for the most part, the performers, are nowhere to be seen. Gone are the chiaroscuro, the figures that dominate the photographs, and the imposing camera angles. Not one photograph was included of Queler in action, in the public sphere, before an audience. The setting, rather than enhancing her prestige as a conductor, works against her. The pictures confirm her domesticity; they minimize her professional work. Although the written text describes Queler as a "prominent conductor," the illustrations belie her prominence.

The Queler pictures may not seem particularly problematic until one recalls that they account for half of all illustrations of women conductors in all middle school music series. As the remaining pictures will confirm, the Queler group is quite typical of the others. There were no illustrations of women conducting an adult ensemble, specifically none in which male performers were conducted. Instead, the pictures suggest that women only conduct other women and children. Furthermore, there were no pictures of women in concert attire and no other cues suggesting an actual performance in progress.

Three photographs featured Gisele Ben-Dor conducting the Norwalk Youth Symphony.[33] In the first picture, Ben-Dor conducts the mostly female string section from a seated position with her back to the viewer. The back view adds an element of anonymity, and her casual attire suggests this is a rehearsal. The accompanying written text indicates the Norwalk Youth Symphony is composed of fine performers; nonetheless, the musicians are children and they are amateurs. The youthfulness and relative inexperience of these performers serve as commentaries on Ben-Dor's status in the conducting realm. Her association with children indicates Ben-Dor could justifiably be called a teacher rather than a conductor, and as indicated earlier, teaching children does not carry the prestige that comes with conducting adult professional musicians. From the chosen camera angle, the viewer looks down upon Ben-Dor and the performers with whom she shares the viewer's attention.

In the most powerful of the three images, the viewer sees Ben-Dor's face.[34] Because she stands, which is a position connoting power, Ben-Dor rises above the performers she conducts; furthermore, the camera angle places her at eye level to the viewer. She is actively conducting and her facial expression, while not particularly intense, does not connote gentleness and sweetness either. This image of power and status is compromised, however, because Ben-Dor is in the background of the photograph. She is identified for the first time on this page, but the print is small and easily missed.

There is little evidence indicating that this cluster of photographs was shot in

an opulent concert hall; instead, there are objects suggesting the setting might be a well-appointed high school auditorium, or perhaps a college stage. For example, the chairs on which the musicians sit do not match and are the dilapidated plastic models typically found in schools. They would probably not be tolerated by professional musicians. Thus, even small details can allude to a setting, which in turn, can suggest the status and implied positional power of the conductor portrayed.

In a photograph introducing a unit on choral singing, an unnamed female conductor directs a group of children (Figure 5). Her youthfulness, casual attire, and anonymity all indicate low status; significantly, the performers are children and they are singers. The pose selected for this picture places the conductor at the bottom of a wedge, with students looming over her. Her prominent position at the front of the photograph renders her somewhat more important than the students, but she and the children vie almost equally for the viewer's attention. She has her back to the viewer. Although she is actively engaged in conducting, the signs that she is a teacher are equally as clear as those suggesting she is a conductor. Her conducting gestures are open, and the smiles on the faces of the children confirm the warmth and friendliness of this teacher/conductor. Here, as elsewhere, the nurturing-female stereotype is furthered. This picture of a female teacher/conductor, while counted as equal to those of males seen earlier, does not challenge the image that high-status positions, those in which the performers are adult professionals, are a male domain.

Three of the female conductors were children (Figure 6). Child musicians generally bring to mind inexperience and amateurism. It is imperative for textbooks to indicate that female children conduct; however, unless ample evidence is simultaneously introduced suggesting that adult women become prestigious conductors in powerful positions, these pictures of girls may do little to promote the idea of equal opportunity for all.

Furthermore, because there were so few female conductors, the difficulty of ascertaining the sex of this figure is significant. The bone structure of the face and arm, when thoughtfully considered, appears to be those of a girl's, but the sex of this individual is not immediately apparent. Thus, in three of the sixteen pictures (18.8 percent), there are few indications that the figure is female.

Conductor, composer, and pianist Cécile Chaminade is the only historical figure among the female conductors pictured (Figure 7). All three series relied to varying degrees on the "great man" approach to music history, whereby representative historic figures were honored with a formal portrait and biographical sketch. Chaminade is one of very few women musicians included in this elite portrait gallery; her name is prominently displayed next to her picture, and one of her compositions is discussed on the previous page. The inclusion of historical figures reminds women musicians that they do, indeed, have a history, and Chaminade's induction into the exclusive "great person" club suggests that the canonical door

Figure 5

Photo from *Holt Music*, Grade 7, Teacher's Edition, by Eunice Boardman Meske, copyright 1988 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Figure 6

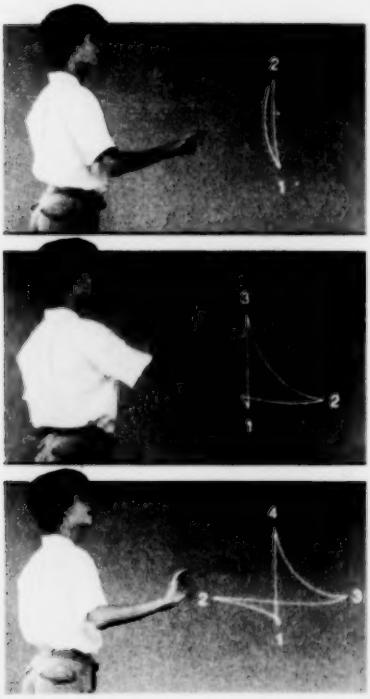


Photo from *Holt Music*, Grade 6, Teacher's Edition, by Eunice Boardman Meske, copyright 1988 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., reprinted by permission of the publisher.

has opened a crack. She is not actively conducting in this picture; however, her pose is similar in many respects to those found in formal portraits of great men. Her facial expression is serious, the lighting dramatic, and the chiaroscuro reminiscent of pictures of males. The absence of a setting draws the viewer's undivided attention to Chaminade. The biographical sketch accompanying the picture indicates she is "remembered mainly for her elegant piano compositions," a value-laden phrase that suggests her works may be deemed trivial by some modern-day critics, but this small slight would probably be lost on most children.[35]

Alongside indicators that challenge traditional discourses about women and point to Chaminade's elite position as a conductor, however, are other signs reinforcing dominant discourses about women. For example, Chaminade is portrayed as young and physically attractive. The chiaroscuro draws attention to

her eyes and full lips (which are emphasized by makeup), as well as to the lacy V-neckline of her dress. All of these objects connote sensuality.[36] The dramatic half-light, obscuring part of her face, adds an aura of mystery or seduction to the image; it also renders her incomplete. In short, while affirming Chaminade as a famous professional musician, this photograph simultaneously reinforces the position that women are sexual objects to be surveyed and enjoyed by men. A curious, conflicted image results.

Conclusion

If large-scale changes in the status of women musicians are to occur, changes in dominant discourses about music, gender, and power are needed. My analysis suggests that current textbook pictures present few challenges to dominant discourses. The textbooks' underrepresentation of women musicians, particularly women conductors, in itself is troubling. Although illustrations of female conductors challenged the construction of conductor as male, representations in these texts often simultaneously reinforced dominant discourses about gender, which in turn, perpetuate unequal power relations. The illustrations tended to draw upon traditional stereotypes pertaining to how men and women think and act. Alpha-style leadership was associated largely with males. Overall, the pictures implied that women are not leaders in the conducting world and do not hold prestigious positions. Signs of prestige and high status, when present in pictures of female conductors, coexisted with others that diminished the status of the figures portrayed. The resulting images are filled with contradictions.

Apple has noted that textbook content in general is replete with conflicts and contradictions, which can be explained, in part, by examining the process of textbook creation. According to Apple, text content is the product of compromise and intense negotiation.[37] Inconsistencies and contradictions sometimes occur because publishers have responded to concerns of disenfranchised groups by adding on new content while removing little of the old; the basic assumptions and ideological framework on which the texts are built remain intact.[38] Apple's analysis prompts contemplation of how texts might look if the assumptions underlying their creation were reconsidered.

If textbooks are carefully scrutinized to assure equitable content, and publishers claim they are, then this study points out a blind spot, which may be shared not only by publishers, but by larger segments of society as well.[39] Further discussion of this blind spot--of taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions concerning music, gender, and power--is needed. I offer no simple solutions to the questions my research raises, and I make no claim to having explored all angles of a complex problem. Thus, this is the first step in a larger research program that needs to be undertaken if sex-equity issues in music and music education are to be better understood and addressed. Given the importance of music in our students' lives and

Figure 7

Historical Pictures/Stock Montage, Chicago.

the pervasiveness of dominant discourses concerning gender, this program is of utmost importance if more space is to be created for girls alongside the boys in the band.

Notes

1. I wish to thank Michael Apple, Elizabeth Ellsworth, and Mariamne Whatley for their critical readings of this article.
2. Lana F. Rakow, "Gender and Race in the Classroom: Teaching Way Out of Line," *Teaching Forum*, [A Publication of the University of Wisconsin Undergraduate Teaching Improvement Council], 12, No. 1 (December 1990).
3. Michael W. Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979),

6.

4. Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 5.
5. Mariamne H. Whatley, "Photographic Images of Blacks in Sexuality Texts," *Curriculum Inquiry*, 18, No. 2 (1988), 140.
6. Michael J. Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis*. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 124.
7. Shapiro, 134.
8. Barthes, 9.
9. *Ibid.*, 9-14.
10. *Ibid.*, 14.
11. *Ibid.*, 16.
12. Whatley, 140.
13. *Ibid.*; Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 86.
14. Whatley, 140.
15. Shapiro, 129.
16. *Ibid.*, 130.
17. *Ibid.*, 126.
18. Weedon, 101
19. *Ibid.*, 147.
20. Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*, 3, 6-7, 35-36, 63-64.
21. See Apple, 82-104, for a discussion of ways that schools can challenge hegemony.
22. David Nyberg, *Power Over Power*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 16.
23. *Ibid.*, 58.
24. *Ibid.*, 62.
25. Helen S. Astin, and Carole Leland, *Women of Influence, Women of Vision: A Cross-Generational Study of Leaders and Social Change*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 119.
26. *Ibid.*, 8.
27. See Betty Friedan, *The Second Stage*. (New York: Summit Books, 1981), 243-250, for a discussion of the research and the styles.
28. *Ibid.*, 246.
29. In-depth discussions of the possible meanings of specific signs abound. See, for example, Shapiro, Chapter 4; John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin, 1972); Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (London: Marion Boyars, 1978); John Fiske, *Television Culture* (London: Routledge, 1987); and Manuel Alvarado, Robin Gutch, and Tana Wollen, *Learning the Media: An Introduction to Media Teaching* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1987), especially Chapters 5-8.
30. As an example, see illustrations on page 62 of Carmen E. Culp, Lawrence Eisman, and Mary E. Hoffman, *World of Music*, Teacher's Edition Grade 8. (Morristown, NJ: Silver Burdett & Ginn, 1988). This is one of four illustrations from volumes published by Silver Burdett & Ginn which do not appear with this article, in three cases because the published refused permission, and in the fourth because the permission did not

arrive in time.

31. Whatley, 141.
32. See pages 208 and 209 of Culp, *World of Music*, Grade 7. This is the second of the illustrations from Silver Burdett & Ginn for which permission to reprint with this article could not be obtained. Overall, this publisher was responsible for 11 of the 16 pictures of female conductors, and the remaining three of the 11 also were clustered together. The second publisher incorporated four photographs, and the third included one. Thus, in a school using the third series, a child would see only one female conductor in three years of textbook instruction.
33. See page 132 of Culp, *World of Music*, Grade 6. This is the third of the illustrations from Silver Burdett & Ginn for which permission to reprint with this article could not be obtained.
34. See page 134 of Culp, *World of Music*, Grade 6. This is the fourth of the illustrations from Silver Burdett & Ginn for which permission to reprint with this article could not be obtained.
35. Barbara Staton and others, *Music and You*, Teacher's Edition, Grade 6. (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 31.
36. For further evidence of the meaning of full lips, see Fiske, 10-11.
37. Michael Apple, "The Text and Cultural Politics," *Journal of Educational Thought*, 24, No. 3A (December 1990), 25.
38. *Ibid.*, 26.
39. In a letter to this author dated October 10, 1990, Donald Kalbach, senior editor of the music division of Silver Burdett & Ginn, enclosed a copy of internal equity guidelines. This letter was a follow-up to a telephone conversation in which Kalbach indicated that textbook content is carefully scrutinized. Silver Burdett was the only publisher of the three to respond to my repeated requests for information about the process of monitoring textbooks. However, published equity guidelines abound, including a set issued by Macmillan, the second of the three publishers whose textbooks were analyzed in this study. See Nancy Roberts, *Guidelines for Creating Positive Sexual and Racial Images in Educational Materials*. (New York: Macmillan, 1975), especially pp. 95-96.

Sources of Illustrations

Figure 1. Carmen E. Culp, Lawrence Eisman, and Mary E. Hoffman, *World of Music*, Teacher's Edidition Grade 6. (Morristown, NJ: Silver Burdett & Ginn, 1988), 56.

Figure 2. Barbara Staton and others, *Music and You*, Teacher's Edition, Grade 6. (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 31.

Figure 3. *Ibid.*, 52.

Figure 4. Eunice Boardman Meske and others, *Holt Music*, Teacher's Edition, Grade 8. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1988), 19.

Figure 5. Meske, Grade 7, 169.

Figure 6. Meske, Grade 6, 68.

Figure 7. Staton, Grade 8, 103.

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